Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature

Edited by

OWEN HODKINSON
PATRICIA A. ROSENMEYER
EVELIEN BRACKE

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Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Owen Hodkinson and Patricia A. Rosenmeyer

I. The Study of Epistolary Narratives

Richard Bentley, in his *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris, Themistocles, Socrates, Euripides, and Others* (London, 1697), took great delight in challenging the origins of what we now call pseudonymous letters. His stated goal was to "pull off the disguise from those little pedants that have stalked about so long in the apparel of heroes".[1] In proving the inauthenticity of so many Greek epistolary texts, Bentley unwittingly all but halted our progress in understanding this genre and literary tradition, consigning them to several centuries of scholarly neglect. Yet certainty about the genuine attribution of a text was almost impossible in antiquity: hence the possibility of turning a profit by making and dealing in literary forgeries. Many epistolary texts which *are* undoubtedly spurious were nevertheless circulated, transmitted, and no doubt read as genuine by countless readers and later authors throughout antiquity, and for some kinds of scholarly inquiry, this ought to have mattered far more than the fact of their spuriousness or genuineness.

Some three centuries later, after large numbers of non-literary papyrus letters had been unearthed by archaeologists at Oxyrhynchus, another blow was dealt to Greek epistolary studies. The biblical scholar Adolf Deissmann, attempting to validate the authenticity of the epistolary writings of Paul in the New Testament (which he viewed as direct insights into the *Realien* of ancient society), invented a system that pitted letter ("Brief") against letter ("Epistel").[2] According to his schema, the former was non-literary, private, and ephemeral, while the latter was literary, sophisticated, and of permanent cultural interest; obviously, for Deissmann's purposes, one Pauline letter was worth ten of Cicero. While Deissmann's views are no longer tenable today, at that time his work had a great influence on classical

[1] Bentley 1697: 79.
[2] Deissmann 1927.

scholarship. It took another fifty years before a different kind of classificatory scheme allowed epistolary writing the flexibility it deserved, and literary letters could hold up their heads again in educated circles.[3]

The letter is one of the most versatile, popular, and historically significant forms of writing in Greek and Roman antiquity. Only in the last two decades, however, have many Greek epistolary texts received serious attention from classical scholars.[4] Latin letters, especially those of particular interest to historians, have fared rather better than Greek, being widely read over a far longer period; texts such as Ovid's *Heroides* have now made a significant impression on the scholarly map of antiquity. But the vast and varied corpus of Greek literary letters now needs to be re-examined—or, in many cases, examined properly for the first time as literary texts.

The tradition of Greek letters, from Plato, Epicurus and Hippocrates through to the Christian epistolographers they influenced, has cumulatively contributed an incalculable amount to the shape of the modern western world. But these letters, and many other less familiar epistolary texts, are usually studied by scholars working within a specific academic discipline such as philosophy, historiography, or religious studies, and therefore in isolation from the larger Greek epistolary tradition. The literary qualities of these collections are often overlooked, despite the fact that they were evidently written as literature: they play with intertextuality, display an awareness of generic conventions, and exhibit a self-consciousness of their literary nature. Other epistolary narratives, clearly spurious but purporting to be documents in the lives of famous historical characters, have been neglected largely because of their spuriousness, but are no less significant in the development of epistolary and fictional literature and their relation to one another.[5]

The aim of this volume is therefore to redress these various imbalances: to give Greek literary letters—as popular and significant contributors to literary history as their Latin counterparts—the attention they are due;

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[3] The first to abandon Deissmann's letter/epistle opposition was Doty 1969. For more recent classificatory schemes, still in the context of biblical studies, see Stirewalt 1993. For a general overview of these classifications, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 5–9.

[4] For monographs, anthologies, and edited collections, see Holzberg 1994; Chemello 1998; Rosenmeyer 2001, 2006 (anthology and translation); Costa 2001 (anthology and translation); Nadjo and Gavoille 2002a, 2002b, 2004; Trapp 2003 (anthology and translation); Jenkins 2006 (including Latin); Morello and Morrison 2007 (including Latin); Muir 2008; Ceccarelli forthcoming.

[5] On the potentially damaging effect of focusing on questions of authenticity and the need to look beyond them in the case of the 'Platonic' letters, see Wohl 1998.

and also to bring sharper focus on the role of Greek epistolography as an important narrative form used throughout the ancient world, from Classical to Late Antiquity, and across the spectrum of modes of literature and classes of readers and writers.

While the 'narrative' element in the volume's title was chosen deliberately, and although several contributors make use of narratological approaches in their chapters, this is not a technical narratological volume. The narrative theme is important primarily because Greek literary epistolarity has been connected with narrative in various ways from the very first appearance of letters in literature. The use of embedded letters to advance the narrative or plot in genres such as historiography, drama, and the novel, and the potential for authentic or pseudonymous letters or collections of letters to function as authentic or fictionalised biography, autobiography, or historical narrative, mean that letters in antiquity play a crucial role in the development of narrative literature of many kinds. Spurious and fictional letters have also been recognised as important in tracing the origins of the ancient novel. The particular capacity of letters to reveal the otherwise unknowable private lives of 'the great and the good', and likewise of 'ordinary people', makes epistolary literature an essential consideration in studying the invention of biographical and autobiographical literature and of prose fiction in antiquity. The *frisson* of external readers 'eavesdropping' on a private conversation is the crucial ingredient of most epistolary literature and helps to explain its popularity as a literary form. This great appeal of letters as reading-matter rather than primarily tools for communication, especially in the Imperial period, also makes it essential that we pay attention to this genre and its great quantity and variety of texts, if we are to understand the reading practices of antiquity without modern prejudices about the 'artificiality' of epistolary literature or the historical status of many of its examples.

The contributions to this volume thus address the many different meeting points of Greek letters and Greek narrative literature, rather than all examining a single phenomenon of 'epistolary narrative' (hence also the plurality of the title). Letters are frequently about narrative, among other things: whether directly to their addressees, narrating events to absent correspondents; or indirectly within a letter collection—presenting fragments of, or oblique hints at, an underlying narrative which the reader must reconstruct for her/himself.[6] In contrast to more general epistolary studies, one

[6] An excellent and wide-ranging recent study of Roman letter books and collections by Gibson (2012) convincingly questions the idea that narrative is often a purpose behind their

of the aims of this volume is to explore both the inherent narrative quality of letters and their use by Greek authors in a variety of genres, and the fragmentary, limited, sometimes even wilfully obscure nature of epistolary narratives which omit vital information in the name of verisimilitude and thus frustrate the reader's desire for a coherent and neat narrative. Letters sometimes constitute important kernels in Greek narratives in other forms, such as historiography, tragedy, or the novel, and many of our contributors examine this phenomenon; others concern texts in epistolary form which present or suggest a narrative either within one letter, or to be reconstructed from a collection of letters.

To achieve these aims, the volume brings together prominent scholars from a range of disciplines within Classics, including history, philosophy, and literary studies, to examine in detail the wealth of literary and narrative forms and uses of the letter in ancient Greek texts. The chapters provide case studies of particular authors and sub-types of the letter: letters within longer narratives such as historiography, biography, or the novel; collections of pseudonymous or fictional letters; and letters which themselves constitute a narrative, either singly, or collectively as in an epistolary novel. The contributors consider, among other issues, the development of literary and narrative techniques and styles which are particularly appropriate to letters, and the reasons for authors choosing epistolary form for texts which could just as effectively have been written in other forms. Major authors such as Plato and Herodotus are included, with specific focus on their epistolary elements and their place within the Greek epistolary and narrative traditions. But equally included are many epistolary texts which have received far less scholarly attention, and which are rarely read even by most classicists, but which deserve close scrutiny both in their own right and for their significance in the development of ancient narrative literature.

The volume is organised chronologically, broadly speaking, but within (and occasionally despite) that, it is divided along the lines of literary form

writing or compilation. A study of Greek letter collections asking the same questions as Gibson is now more desirable than ever, but given the vast scope and relatively inaccessible nature of many Greek letters, is still far from being attained. It is immediately apparent, however, that narrative is a more frequent aim among Greek letter books, especially fictional ones, as Gibson notes (2012: 58 n. 9): the epistolary novels and writers of miniature narratives in epistolary form such as Aelian and Alciphron are cases in point; it could be argued that the letters of [Plato] number biographical narrative among their purposes, in which case a narrative agenda is set very early in Greek literary epistolography. Without a comparable study of the arrangement of Greek (non-fictional) letter collections, it is impossible to advance or deny a comparable hypothesis to Gibson's on their narrative aims or otherwise.

and genre and of different contexts for the use of epistolary form. This is for two related reasons. First, we are interested in looking at the letter in Greek literature as a uniquely flexible narrative form that can both incorporate and be incorporated by other genres. Much has been written about Latin epistolography as a genre, including its development over time and the influence of major epistolographers on those coming later in the tradition.[7] This volume will aim, among other things, to look at the Greek epistolary tradition in a similar way, as a kind of literature that develops over time, growing in popularity and—concurrently and consequently—in the variety of forms it takes. The second, related reason for this arrangement is in order to take into account not only the allusions of later epistolographers to earlier ones, but also any apparent influences of earlier epistolographers on the epistolary form, style, and methods of later ones. For these reasons, the editors have assembled a wide range of types of epistolary literature, historical periods, and angles from which scholars with different interests might approach our themes. While the topics covered range from tragedy, Herodotus and (Ps.-) Plato, to Philostratus, Josephus, and the Christian martyrs, we have not aimed to be exhaustive, since the number of texts to be included in such a project would be prohibitively vast. Rather, we envision this volume as a collection of studies which will contribute to and provoke further scholarship on Greek epistolary narratives.

II. Themes and Variations

1. *Epistolary Writing and Narrative*

The primary theme which unites all the chapters in this volume is the connection between epistolary writing and narrative, variously construed. At the simplest level, this leads many chapters to explore different ways in which epistolarity contains, or is contained within, narrative. The use of the epistolary medium as a container for narratives is a widespread phenomenon in Greek literature, and writing narrative in this form entails a specific set of challenges and its own particular effects.[8] This in itself may

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[7] Some of the more significant contributions: in general: Cugusi 1983, 1989; Gunderson 1997; Nadjo and Gavoille 2002a, 2002b, 2004; Jenkins 2006; Ebbeler 2009; Gibson 2012; Wilcox 2012; on Cicero: Cotton 1985, 1986; Griffin 1995; Hutchinson 1998; Beard 2002; Butler 2002; Henderson 2007; Hall 2009; White 2010; on Caesar: Ebbeler 2003; on Horace: De Pretis 2002; on Ovid: Kennedy 1984; Rosenmeyer 1997; Farrell 1998; Jolivet 2001; Lindheim 2003; Spentzou 2003; on Pliny: Marchesi 2008; Gibson and Morello 2012.

[8] See II.2 below on this theme.

seem a trivial observation, but it is nevertheless one which has been far less explored in epistolary writing than in other Greek narrative genres.[9] Many of the contributions in this volume therefore highlight the ways in which epistolarity can serve narrative, in the sense that it conveys information which is narrative, although often short, partial, or fragmentary. But epistolarity can also hinder and obfuscate narrative, partly because of its customary brevity and the consequent necessity for the reader to reconstruct what happens for her/himself out of a partial account, and partly because of the personal and necessarily one-sided nature of any individual piece of epistolary writing.

The variety produced by authors of Greek epistolary narrative encompasses individual letters containing a complete narrative, letters conveying information to internal and external readers within a longer narrative text, and collections of letters containing a fragmented narrative which has to be pieced together from several individual letters (and often leaves much unsaid in the gaps in the correspondence). These various manifestations of narrative conveyed through epistolarity are each the focus of one or more chapters here. The effects on a narrative of the appearance of a letter, that is, separately from the effects of the verbal and textual message it contains, are also significant, especially for authors such as Herodotus and Euripides, whose narratives are set in a time when the very use of a written message was rare in Greek culture and thus remarkable. At least on the stage, the striking quality of letters appearing in a narrative is extremely persistent, as the crucial role of letters to the plot and the suspicion and doubts they cause in *Hamlet* show—a characteristic of Shakespearean drama recognised and affectionately exaggerated by Tom Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The chapters on these epistolary texts examine the ways in which authors exploit the impact on a narrative of the physical presence of a letter and its means of conveyance, sometimes in addition to and sometimes without including the text of the letter itself.

A related theme of the volume is the particular affinity that epistolary writing has with certain other forms of writing: a letter can potentially be used to narrate anything, of course, and indeed there is a huge variety of kinds and themes of narrative in the Greek epistolary tradition; but at the same time it is evident that certain subjects were understood to be especially apt for presentation in epistolary form. Biography and autobiography

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9 Even in volumes which aim to be more or less comprehensive in their study of Greek narrative in all its forms such as de Jong, Nünlist and Bowie 2004, and de Jong and Nünlist 2007, there is neither a special section devoted to the epistolary form nor much concentration on any individual epistolary texts.

are perhaps the most obvious of these subjects: a letter writer in real life will often narrate events in her/his life to inform the addressee, and documentary letters are of course invaluable for biographers in reconstructing the facts of their subjects' lives. But in terms of Greek literary epistolography, where the real author is often not the purported letter-writer, the epistolary medium is a biographical (and pseudo-autobiographical) form in itself. There is thus much overlap between the Greek biographical tradition and the epistolary tradition,[10] which can be seen most clearly perhaps in the case of Euripides: writings about his life in both epistolary and other forms share many of the same inventions, embellishments, and concerns, and are no doubt mutually influential.

The impulse to compose pseudonymous epistolary narratives seems to be very similar to that of the early authors of *bioi* in the Greek tradition: a desire to convey information about the private lives of historical individuals such as Plato, Euripides, and Demosthenes, which does not emerge from their 'official', published corpus. One of the best ways in which epistolary biographical inventions might come to be accepted or 'authenticated', in the way in which fictions employ authentication devices, is to pass them off as the private correspondence of the subject him/herself, who can plausibly be thought to have written about his/her private thoughts and experiences in a letter to a close companion. The pseudonymous author can thereby 'reveal' to the external reader things which canonical writings by the historical author do not. For a writer of pseudonymous or fictionalising letters 'by' a historical figure and based, however loosely, around the traditional life story of that figure, epistolary form is thus a wonderful opportunity to expand upon those traditions in the manner of a modern fictionalising biographer or biographical novelist, without the resulting text having the air of pure invention. We might view in this light the correspondence attributed to Alexander the Great and the *Alexander Romance*, some of the letters of Plato, Euripides, and Epicurus, and the later epistolary narratives attributed to Chion and Themistocles.

The same impulse to write and read about private lives is also developed in a different direction in the Greek epistolary tradition, namely in fictional letters attributed to ordinary or low-status characters. Tobias Smollett's 18th-century epistolary novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, in which the titular character is a poor stable boy, is about the closest comparison modern

[10] This is explored by Trapp 2006 (touching on a variety of examples), and Hanink 2010 and Poltera, this volume, in relation to Euripides. For ancient biography in general Hägg 2012 is now indispensible.

literature has to offer, while the same tendency minus epistolarity (illustrating the unchanging proximity of (auto-)biographical to epistolary fiction) is shown in George and Weedon Grossmith's 19th-century novel *Diary of a Nobody*. Representative of this direction are the texts of Alciphron and Aelian,[11] where the minutiae of the daily lives of nobodies are apparently entertainment enough without the supposed correspondents claiming legendary, heroic, or even historical status. This kind of interest in the mundane can be seen in Old and especially New Comedy and then later in pastoral and urban mime, while in the Classical and early Hellenistic period, literature based around ordinary individuals and private lives is very much in the minority among literary forms.[12] Fictionalising biographical and autobiographical forms, prominently among them the letter, begin to pay attention to the private lives as well as public deeds and sayings of *historical* figures from very early on. But by the Imperial period, the emphasis of many such writings is more on the private lives for their own sake than on the historical personages attached to them—thus pandering to a 'gossip column' kind of mentality, as we can see in, for example, ps.-Aeschines *Ep*. 10—and paving the way for interest in entirely fictional lives, as in the epistolary ghost story in Phlegon of Tralles.

The interest in writing and reading about the lives of ordinary people is also seen in the Imperial period in the rise of the novel and novelistic texts:[13] the similarities between these and epistolary texts are not restricted to the focus on 'private lives' that they both have in common, as they also share in many cases a clear generic affiliation with the same predecessors in comedy[14] and pastoral.[15] The connection has been hypothesised by some as a

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[11] For Alciphron, see most recently Hodkinson 2012 as well as in this volume König, Gordon (pp. 145, 150–151); on Aelian see the chapter on the *Epistles* in an excellent monograph by Smith (forthcoming), and Hodkinson 2013b.

[12] One exception to this generalisation is *iambos* in archaic poetry, where low characters are both the instigators and the objects of verbal (and sometimes physical) abuse.

[13] Though admittedly the protagonists in the Greek novel are 'bourgeois' ordinary people rather than 'low' characters, they are nevertheless not famous historical figures or mythical heroes; and in the case of the protagonist of the Greek *Onos*, we also have a completely ordinary 'hero' in the Greek novelistic tradition.

[14] The link between New Comedy plots and those of the Greek novel as well as the influence on fictional letters is well established: on the novel, see e.g. Corbato 1968; Borgogno 1971; Hunter 1983: 67–70; Paulsen 1992; Crismani 1997; Brethes 2007: 13–63; Smith 2007: 104–110; on Aelian and Alciphron, see e.g. Volkman 1886; Thyresson 1964; Hunter 1983: 6–15. For a summary of the reception of comedy in both the Greek novel and Greek fictional letters, see Höschele forthcoming.

[15] This is true especially in the case of Longus, as well as some of the letters of Aelian and

stronger one than just these common impulses and influences: in particular, if we were to accept Merkelbach's theory of the origin of the *Alexander Romance* as an epistolary novel, the earliest known novelistic text would be inextricably linked to the fictional epistolary-biographical tradition. While the foundations for Merkelbach's specific thesis are robustly challenged in this volume, it is clear that, given the large number of letters contained in the *Alexander Romance*, there are strong links between this early novelistic text and later fictional letters. The ongoing connections between these forms is seen in the use of embedded letters within many of the Greek novels and other fictional texts (e.g. Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*), and also in the collections of letters attributed to Chion, Themistocles, and Hippocrates, all of which have been labelled by scholars as 'epistolary novels'.[16] The contributions in this volume explore these various connections between novels and other narrative texts and Greek epistolary writing, focusing on shared narrative techniques such as the embedding of letters within longer narrative forms and the use of the letter as a medium for a short story.

It is a further testament to the flexibility of the letter that it can be associated equally with private, mundane affairs, and public, authoritative script. An example of the latter is the official communiqué: authentic letters and reports between people in positions of authority about events under their jurisdiction, such as Pliny's letters as governor of Bithynia to the emperor Trajan.[17] With such letters, there is always the question of how to distinguish between the actual letter and what was (perhaps later) written up for publication and therefore to be read as a piece of literature. Using this real epistolary mode for a more 'literary' piece of writing takes it to a different level. This is what we see in the epistolary ghost story in Phlegon of Tralles, a story cast in letter form because of its fictional context and in order to create a particular kind of narrator—the regional official reporting to a superior about events under his jurisdiction.[18] The bureaucratic world of official

Alciphron. Cf. Hunter 1983: 6–15 and Hodkinson 2012 on Alciphron's reception of pastoral and New Comedy.

16 Cf. Rosenmeyer 1994 and 2001: 133–252; Holzberg 1994 for this genre in Greek antiquity.

17 Pliny *Epp*. Bk. 10.

18 Compare Arrian's *Periplus* which is cast as an official epistolary report to the Emperor by Arrian as governor, but refers to the *real* official report in Latin being attached (Arr. *Periplus* 6.2); this report does not survive. So the Greek text we have, in part a narrative of Arrian's voyage round the Black Sea region and modelled extensively on earlier periplus literature, is in fact a purely literary narrative which uses the official letter form as a kind of justification or explanation for the text's existence. Cf. Liddle 2003: 30 with references.

communication by letter in the Roman Empire was also ripe for satire as well as literary appropriation, as we see in the use of parody and pastiche in the epistolary sections of Lucian's *Saturnalia*.

The sections above summarise some of the most important ways in which epistolarity and narrative are linked within the Greek literary tradition, and point out the most popular modes of epistolary writing and their cognate literary genres. The embedding of letters can occur within a wide range of genres. The epistolary-literary tradition begins in Greek with this kind of embedding, as well as with pseudonymous letter collections which aim for verisimilitude, and the contributions to the first section of this volume explore these beginnings and texts which exploit the epistolary form in these two primary ways. In subsequent sections, contributors offer readings of other kinds of epistolary texts, tracing the generically interesting developments which occur when these forms start to combine or overlap: when entire narratives are contained within individual letters or constructed from multiple letters, or when the embedded letters increase either in volume within a narrative (e.g. the *Alexander Romance*) or in structural significance for the containing narrative (e.g. the novels). The fictionalised autobiography to which the pseudonymous letter collection readily lends itself also develops as a very popular literary form from the late Hellenistic period onwards, leading by various routes to the epistolary novels based on the lives of historical figures and to the miniature narratives of lives of fictional characters as in Alciphron and ps.-Aeschines *Ep.* 10.

2. *A Narratology of Letters*

Epistolary narrative presents the author with unique opportunities and challenges, which exercised numerous writers of epistolary novels particularly in the early period of the modern novel.[19] For instance, epistolary realism is a hindrance to narrative realism: what a letter-writer would tell his addressee in a genuine letter in a given fictive situation may often be less than the external writer needs or would like to tell the external reader, so that a compromise must sometimes be reached between the two kinds of

[19] Famous examples are Richardson's *Clarissa* (on which cf. Castle 1982; Eagleton 1982; Gillis 1984); the Comte de Guilleragues's *Lettres portugaises*; and Laclos' *Liaisons dangereuses*. On the early modern epistolary novel cf. Jost 1966; Cook 1996. Key studies of epistolarity in modern literature more broadly include Altman 1982; Kauffman 1986; Goldsmith 1989; MacArthur 1990; Kauffman 1992; Favret 1993; Bray 1993; Versini 1998; Gilroy and Verhoeven 2000.

realism. Or again epistolary realism can be a hindrance to narrative satisfaction: most obviously if the main character is the letter-writer/narrator, and the narrative ends with her/his death, the ending cannot be contained in the narrative but only implied—as in the ancient *Briefroman Chion of Heraclea*, whose author must rely on the readers' prior knowledge of the story to assume that Chion does indeed die after the final letter—and so narrative closure is denied to the reader.[20] Of course, one way of avoiding this difficulty is by compromising the epistolary form, as Goethe in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* does by switching to third-person narrative after Werther's suicide note;[21] but in a purely epistolary narrative such as *Chion* the writer-narrator's death can at best be foreshadowed. Janet Altman, in her seminal volume *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, notes this recurring tension in epistolary narratives:[22]

> If epistolary narrative problematizes the definition of the narrative events constituting its "action", it is for a simple reason: the storytelling impulse behind letter narrative is constantly constrained and modified by the letter's discursive nature … Its narrativity (defined as stories we can abstract from a narrative medium) is profoundly affected, if not limited, by its medium.

Authors in the Greek epistolary tradition anticipate many of the strategies of modern epistolary narratives in wrestling with these unique challenges of epistolary narrative and overcoming them in a great variety of ways, as our chapters demonstrate.

If authors of epistolary narrative are to any extent concerned with realism, they must pay attention first and foremost to the motivation implicit in any epistolary context, namely absence. Epistolary communication is justified by the separation of the writer from the receiver; one writes because one cannot speak. Absence may take several forms: it may be caused by geographical separation, psychological or emotional distance, or a chronological gap.[23] The letter is always a sign or reminder of that absence that engenders and sustains the correspondence. Not all letter writers, however, actually desire to overcome the absence that divides them from their readers. A letter also offers its writer the opportunity to address someone

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20 Cf. Ovid *Her.* 11; but in cases like this where suicide is anticipated in a letter (a modern epistolary narrative ending thus is the 'Letters from Zedelghem' section of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* whose last letter [487–490] is a suicide note), it is asking less of the reader to assume the expected closure than in a case of more uncertain outcome like Chion's.

21 Goethe 1885: 2.352.

22 Altman 1982: 206–207.

23 The types of absence are articulated by Rosbottom 1977, esp. 284–285.

without interruption, without any personal interaction at all during the act of communicating. The writer is unaffected by the addressee's body language, uninfluenced by encouraging or critical interjections. In a similar vein, 'confessional' writing in isolation creates a space for self-exploration or involuntarily revealing self-representation, which the act of speech and the presence of a listener might inhibit.[24] The letter may be used in this way, both in antiquity and later, to short-circuit a sticky issue of decorum for a female character: Euripides' Phaedra and the ill-fated Portuguese Nun (in the 17th-century French epistolary love story *Lettres portugaises*) write words of passion that they never could have uttered in person. Of course, the letter writer is never wholly free of the influence of the intended recipient (or the image he or she projects onto that recipient) in the construction of the self on the page; but a writer can use the physical absence of the recipient productively to free her/himself from some of the anxieties associated with a personal encounter.

The letter, then, always plays a dual role, highlighting proximity or distance. The letter makes the recipient present to the sender (and *vice versa*), acting as a bridge or chain connecting the correspondents. When Cicero writes a congratulatory note to his friend Pulcher, the letter offers him a connection: "Therefore I embraced you, absent, in my imagination ..." (*complexus igitur sum cogitatione te absentem ...*, *Ad Fam.* 3.11.2); similarly, Seneca identifies a letter as the "true traces of an absent friend" (*vera amici absentis vestigia*, *Ep.* 40.1). At the same time, the letter is a poor substitute for actually being in the company of one's interlocutor, and cannot adequately or fully replace physical presence: again Cicero, completing his sentence above, "... but I really did kiss the letter" (*epistulam vero osculatus ...*, *Ad Fam.* 3.11.2). In this latter case, the letter stands in for the absent addressee, reminding the participants of the unbridgeable gap between writer and reader, a trope developed at great length by Ovid in the *Heroides* as well as in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Every letter thus has an ambiguous potential. In epistolary narratives, writing and reading letters are represented at once as the most intimate and the most isolating of activities.[25]

In the case of embedded letters within narratives, one set of unique challenges is clustered around some potential dualities of the status of the letters mentioned. Many of our contributors highlight the letter as both physical

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[24] See Preston 1970: 88.
[25] Preston 1970: 3.

object and text—that is, as something which signifies by its presence alone before or even without its text being quoted; this is especially the case in our earliest examples, Herodotus and Euripides, since their narratives are set in contexts in which letters are unusual and thus potentially suspect. This idea of letter as signifier beyond and perhaps despite what its written content signifies is famously explored by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Barbara Johnson, in their analyses of Edgar Allen Poe's short story *The Purloined Letter*.[26] Another important distinction among embedded letters is that between action described in a letter ("lettre-confidence") and action developed through or by means of letters ("lettre-drame"), labels introduced by Francois Jost in his study of the 18th-century French epistolary novel.[27] In the former category, also called "static" or "communicative" letters, the epistolary form is used within a larger (sometimes epistolary, sometimes non-epistolary) narrative to report events to correspondents who are otherwise uninvolved in the events being narrated. Letters in the second category, also called "kinetic" or "active", provoke actions and reactions, and function as actual agents in the narrative, as the action progresses through the letters themselves.

One of the most difficult tasks of the epistolary author is to sustain a believable relationship between internal writers and readers while simultaneously making the narrative accessible to external readers. Sometimes the need for verisimilitude in the epistolary exchange may interfere with the amount of information available for transmission to an external reader. As Janet Altman puts it, the epistolary author has a basic problem of communication:[28]

> The writer of epistolary fiction has a fundamental problem: the letter novelist (A) must make his letter writer (B) speak to an addressee (C) in order to communicate with a reader (D) who overhears; how does he reconcile the exigencies of story (communication between novelist and reader) with the exigencies of interpersonal discourse (communication between correspondents)? [...] The very qualities that guarantee the letter work's epistolarity in the mimetic sense (predominance of discursive elements and absence of an editor, which produce what Barthes would call the "effet de réel" and make the letters look like real letters) work against its narrativity, making the entire concept of an "epistolary fiction" as paradoxical as that of the nonfiction novel.

26 For a summary of the scholarly debate, see Johnson 1982; Muller and Richardson 1988.
27 Jost 1966.
28 Altman 1982: 210.

Out of this communication challenge, however, comes one of the most seductive aspects of epistolary narrative, namely the issue of "overhearing". A large part of the form's appeal is the stage-managed eavesdropping by the external reader on a private, often highly personal conversation between the internal writer and reader, and the illicit pleasure of 'discovering' their secret lives. This sets up a 'triangulation' which is always present (more or less foregrounded) in epistolary literature between the author, the internal correspondents, and the external reader. As Altman expresses it:[29]

> [W]hat makes this form so intriguing to study [...] is the way in which it explicitly articulates the problematics involved in the creation, transmission, and reception of literary texts. By the very structural conditions of the letter-writing situation (which involves absence from the addressee and the constitution of a "present" addressee, removal from events and yet also the constitution of events) epistolary literature intensifies awareness of the gaps and traps that are built into the narrative representation of intersubjective and temporal experience.

A further narratological complication occurs when the author of the embedded letter must decide how to focalise his narrative. The usual strategy for a historiographical or novelistic text is to use a reliable third-person narrator—usually an 'omniscient' or 'zero-focalising' narrator as in epic,[30] in which case we assume the letters quoted are reliably representative of the letters actually (or fictionally) written by the character in question. But alternatively, the author has the option of focalising the letter through a sometimes less stable first-person narrator who is quoting them—or 'quoting' them, perhaps, in the case of a potentially unreliable narrator, as we shall see to be the case in the chapter on Achilles Tatius. Another epistolary focalisation strategy appears in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, where the primary narrator's accounts are authenticated and shown to be reliable by their connections to Apollonius' own accounts in his letters quoted in the text.

This issue of authentication looms large in the world of literary letters. Letters themselves can be used as authentication devices within a larger narrative; they act as 'documentary' evidence when quoted, and are understood to guarantee that the narrative is either a well-researched and historically

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[29] Altman 1982: 212.

[30] The narratological term 'zero focalisation' is approximately equivalent to omniscient narration, implying that the narrator has 'no point of view' but is able to see from all characters' perspectives and to focalise his narration through any of them: cf. e.g. Genette 1979.

accurate account, in the case of historiography or biography, or a realistic and credible fictional narrative, in the case of pseudo-documentarism.[31] Including a letter in a larger narrative is one of the most common ways to authenticate an ancient Greek text. Surrounding the embedded letter itself are further authentication strategies: references to delivery methods, hints at hidden codes, and elaborate explanations for the survival and transmission of the letter in question to the contemporary reader. This use of letters as marks of authenticity arises from their status as potential pieces of documentary evidence when they *are* in fact real, but also probably from their imagined status as somehow inherently truthful and reliable.

The inherently truthful nature of letters, whether embedded or self-contained narratives, comes from the idea that they offer an unmediated glimpse into the soul of their writers. The ancient literary critic "Demetrius" claims that "each person … writes an image of his own soul in a letter" (*On Style* 227).[32] The belief that a letter is a direct reflection of the writer's soul persists over centuries. Heloise turns to letters to communicate with her beloved Abelard because "they have soul, they can speak, they have in them all the force which expresses the transports of the heart".[33] The Renaissance scholar Justus Lipsius writes of the letter that "our feelings and almost our very thoughts are exposed as if engraved on a votive tablet"; Lipsius may in turn be quoting Horace's comments on Lucilius' diaries: "so the old man's entire life story lies open to view, as if it were written down on votive tablets" (*quo fit ut omnis / votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella / vita senis*, Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.33–34).[34] Much later Dr. Johnson echoes their words:[35]

> A man's letters […] are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process. Nothing is inverted, nothing distorted, you see systems in their elements, you discover actions in their motives.

This ancient and modern association of letters with truth has interesting ramifications for epistolary literature, including pseudonymous letters and

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[31] On authentication *vs*. 'authentication' in Greek fiction, including the role of letters, Ní Mheallaigh 2008 is invaluable.

[32] *De elocutione* 227: σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἕκαστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἐπιστολῆς: "It is almost as if each person writes an image of his own soul in a letter. It is possible, in every other kind of composition, to recognize the writer's character, but in none of them as clearly as in the letter form". Greek text from Malherbe 1988: 18–19; translation our own.

[33] Quoted in Gillis 1984: 129.

[34] Quoted in Gillis 1984: 129.

[35] Quoted in Watt 1957: 191.

biographical epistolary narratives: in choosing the epistolary form, authors can tap into readers' inherent belief in letters to rewrite the life of a historical figure, or to supply fictively something of the private side of a figure whose own writings reveal little personal information (see e.g. the letters attributed to Plato, Euripides, or Epicurus). The direct and personal nature of letters also lends itself to the assumption that they portray their authors more faithfully and sincerely than a polished rhetorical work by the same writer. This may in part account for the popularity of epistolary form in antiquity, particularly in the absence of any true autobiographical form (at least until M. Aurelius' *Meditations*): whether forged, fictitious, or real, there was evidently an appetite for the kinds of information which celebrity (auto-)biographies supply today, and the epistolary form was an obvious medium through which to provide it.

It must also be noted that the traditional view of the true or confessional nature of letters is offset by an equally powerful assumption that letters in narratives function as a means by which characters deceive each other, that is as inherently *un*truthful; this is present from the very first letter in Greek narrative, the "harmful signs" in the *Iliad* (6.168).[36] There is thus in epistolary narratives a constant tension between two diametrically opposed expectations raised in their readers: letters can be either a guarantee of veracity or a guarantee of falsehood—or they can be both, at different points in the text.

Different yet analogous issues present themselves when we are dealing with epistolary books or self-contained epistolary narratives rather than embedded letters. Collected letters can form a straightforward narrative, but more often than not they cannot be read simply sequentially, but rather merely suggest a narrative, often filled with gaps or contradictions, that the reader must struggle to comprehend. As Altman points out,[37]

> Letter narrative is elliptical narration. Paradoxically many of its narrative events may be nonnarrated events of which we see only the repercussions [...] In the epistolary situation where an addressee may already know of events, or a writer may be reluctant to report them, dialogue may simply reflect rather than report external events.

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[36] On letters as instruments of deceit, see Steiner 1994: 107, where writing in Herodotus "rapidly gathers both sinister and pejorative associations"; Rosenmeyer 2001: 27–28, 40–60, 88–96, 110–130 on deceitful letters in Homer, the historians, the tragedians, and Callimachus respectively; and Jenkins 2006: 15–36 on epistolary deceit and forgery in the myth of Palamedes; see Bowie, this volume pp. 71–76 on the *Iliad* passage and deceitfulness and epistolarity generally.

[37] Altman 1982: 207.

The author can choose to include both (or multiple) sides of a correspondence—as in the epistolary 'novel' on Hippocrates; or simply one side—as in those on Chion of Heraclea and Themistocles. A modern epistolary narrative of the second sort is the previously mentioned 'Letters from Zedelghem' section of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas*, in which the correspondence varies in frequency and longer than usual gaps are marked by worried queries: the following example nicely draws the external readers' attention to the elliptical nature of the narrative, as well as to the fact that we only possess one half of the correspondence:[38]

> Sixsmith,
> Where the blazes is your reply? Look here, I'm much obliged to you, but if you think I'll wait around for your letters to appear, I'm afraid you're sorely mistaken.

An epistolary author can document a complete correspondence from a particular period in the letter-writer's life, or refer to other letters which are not included in the extant letters available to the reader of the narrative; an extreme example of the latter is the lengthy and apparently jumbled collection of letters attributed to Phalaris.[39] All these authorial choices—one voice or two? sequential letters or gaps?—will affect how much work the reader will have to expend in the search for a satisfying and logical narrative experience.

An epistolary collection containing letters by multiple (fictional) authors can present readers with intriguing layers of multivocality. Of course, if the real author is the same throughout the text, as in the case of the fictional letters about Hippocrates (containing letters attributed to Hippocrates' correspondents as well as to himself), then it is not a *truly* multivocal text. But if the author attempts a convincing *ethopoieia* of each individual epistolographer in the collection, then a more varied set of literary and epistolary styles is exhibited, as we see, for example, in Alciphron or the *Heroides*, where the authors impersonate numerous epistolographers in succession. This multivocality can encompass not only different fictional authors with different epistolary styles, but also different levels of adherence to epistolary convention, as we shall see in the case of Lucian's correspondents in his *Saturnalia*. A similar possibility for variety within one epistolary collection is presented to authors by the existence of many sub-genres of letter, each with its own

38 Mitchell 2004: 471.

39 On Phalaris, see Tudeer 1931; Bianchetti 1987; Russell 1988; Rosenmeyer 2001: 224–231; Hinz 2001, with Henderson's (2001) review.

conventions and formal features, such as the letter of invitation, the letter of recommendation, or the letter accompanying a gift. These might be thought of as analogous to the genres attached to specific functions within Archaic lyric poetry, such as the *epithalamium* or *propemptikon*. Ancient epistolary handbooks and sets of model letters list rules and formal features of these different genres of letters, and they can be as distinct as different genres of lyric poetry.[40]

In books of letters where the individual parts do not constitute a single sustained narrative, but are rather more loosely connected, such as those of Aelian and Alciphron, and in free-standing individual letters which contain narrative, such as those attributed to Phlegon or ps.-Aeschines *Epistle* 10, we have another interesting phenomenon in the development of Greek narrative literature: the invention of a 'short story' form, which sometimes narrates a complete story in the space of a single letter. The extant examples of this kind of epistolary text all come from the Imperial period and, so far as can be established, are related to the literary trends commonly associated with the Second Sophistic.[41] These might all be classified as what Graham Anderson, referring specifically to Alciphron, termed the prose 'miniature'.[42] Such 'miniatures' are not always narrative: there is barely any narrative in most of Philostratus' letters, for instance, and his *Imagines* are primarily descriptive and ecphrastic. But the use of epistolary form as a medium for self-contained short stories was a popular choice in this period, no doubt because of the exciting possibilities it offered in terms of narrative technique (as the epistolary narrative in Phlegon especially shows) and in allowing readers to 'overhear' private conversations on titillating themes (as both Phlegon and ps.-Aeschines offer).

In all the variations of epistolary narrative discussed here, there is something about epistolary form which encourages self-conscious fiction and a high metaliterary content.[43] (Post-) modern and metafictional novels pick up these possibilities for play with epistolarity: Christine Brooke-Rose's *Amalgamemnon* for instance contains several letters which are more or less meta-epistolary, including this case where the letter is not in fact composed,

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[40] A convenient source for ancient epistolary handbooks is Malherbe 1988; cf. also Malosse 2004; Poster 2007.

[41] On epistolary literature in the Second Sophistic, see Hodkinson forthcoming (b).

[42] Anderson 1997.

[43] Hodkinson forthcoming (a) argues this extensively with one of the epistolary novels (Chion); cf. also Hodkinson 2007b on the Themistocles *Briefroman*, esp. 260–261, 268–270.

but replaced by a meditation on the form the expected letter will take, the conventional formulae it will open with, and the recipient's response to it:[44]

> Dear Ms Inkytea, the other letter will start with innocuous hopes of wellbeing at reception and that my silence won't be due to illness or some other contretemps, to be followed by five pages of electronic typewriter [...] which I'll skip to find out what in fact she'll be wanting this time, ah, here.

But the metaliterary potential of epistolary fiction is already explored in great variety in antiquity. Literary letter-writers often reflect upon the similarities and differences of their medium to speech and oral communication, for example,[45] and authors often show an awareness of some of the complexities and contradictions in their uses within a narrative, making epistolary sections of a text often highly self-conscious moments. Because of the relative informality of the epistolary form, literary letter-writers can comment overtly on their own use of the form, style, and conventions, far more readily than in many other forms. Epistolary texts also playfully draw attention to their own creation and transmission, commenting on the method of delivery (letters secreted on the person of the messenger or tattooed onto him),[46] fear of interception, or the challenge of elaborate linguistic codes that only the correct addressee can comprehend. The aptness of epistolary literature for reflexive and metaliterary texts is another feature which several of our contributors note. But at yet another level, letters can also take advantage of their original status as documents, in turn building and maintaining communities of like-minded writers and readers (e.g. the letters of Epicurus and the Epicureans, and those of the early Christian martyrs), or promising a literary link to future recipients who will use them as portals into a time long

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44 Brooke-Rose 1994: 97.

45 Cf. Hodkinson 2007a on advantages and disadvantages of letters compared with speech, discussing examples in Isocrates (*Ep.* 1) and Plato (*Ep.* 3) as well as several in Aelian and Alciphron. The broader debate over writing *vs.* speech is well rehearsed, of course, but especially pertinent to, and therefore frequently occurring in, narratives in letters and narratives with epistolary situations. In Aesch. *Suppl.* 946–949, speech is safer than writing: "These things are not written down on tablets or sealed up in the folds of scrolls; you hear the clear words of a tongue and a mouth that speaks in freedom"; this conclusion is reversed in Eur. *Hipp.* 1076–1077: Theseus does not believe Hippolytus' words, having Phaedra's letter in his hand—the written words are more accurate than his son's speech (see Rosenmeyer 2001: 71, 93–94 for discussion). This comparison in epistolary literature also occurs e.g. at Demosth. *Ep.* 1.3, Isoc. *Ep.* 8.7, Ov. *Her.* 1.2.

46 Herodotus 5.35 mentions a letter tattooed on a slave's shaven head; see Rosenmeyer 2001: 48. Aeneas Tacticus suggests tattooing a letter between the fingers of a messenger; see Jenkins 2006: 55.

gone. As we map the history of epistolary narratives in this volume, moving from early uses to later elaborations, we should always keep in mind the dual nature of the letter as both authentic and fictional, 'honest' and manipulative, literary and metaliterary.

3. *Epistolary Literary History*

Another important theme which emerges from the contributions to this volume is that of the development over time of the Greek literary-epistolary tradition. The volume is structured approximately in chronological order. Section I presents texts exploiting the two earliest and most frequent ways of using epistolary form in Greek literature: embedding in extended narratives, and pseudonymous collections. Section II highlights ways in which these uses are extended or modified: by combining these forms with other literary genres; by changing the nature of the embedding text from historiographic to novelistic, thus widening possibilities for the integration and narrative significance of embedded letters; and by changing the letter to the container of narrative instead of the contained element within the narratives. Section III discusses texts which combine specific religious and cultural uses of epistolary writing with formulae and conventions of the Greek epistolary tradition to create their own variants upon it.

The picture of a literary history of epistolarity emerges over the course of the volume. There are of course many exceptions, in the sense that there are later texts which use the epistolary form in a very similar way to its earliest uses. Thus, for example, the letters of Euripides, composed in the Imperial period, are best compared stylistically and thematically to probably the earliest pseudonymous letter collection, that attributed to Plato, and they are therefore discussed in our Section I. But such 'exceptions' do not disprove the fact that there is development in literary uses of epistolary form; rather, they show that some later authors chose to keep broadly to familiar uses of the form while others had already begun to modify it in various ways. The basic observation to make about development is that, as with any genre or literary form, over time, some authors will experiment with combining it with other existing forms, with creating formal and thematic variants upon it, while other authors will retain a more traditional use of the form.

Another important feature in the chronological development of the Greek literary-epistolary tradition is the way in which individual later texts contain allusions to earlier examples in the same genre. The relative lack of scholarship on many of the Greek epistolary texts, especially of scholarship treating them as literary texts worthy of study in their own right rather than

as bad forgeries, means that these intertextual relationships have not yet received much scholarly attention. Some of the contributions here point out intertextuality of various kinds between earlier and later texts in the Greek epistolary tradition, including apparent modelling by later authors on earlier texts' uses of the epistolary form. Certain texts, e.g. especially the letters of Plato, emerge as particularly important for other letter collections. This is significant not only for the individual works considered in the chapters of this volume, but also in beginning to trace a more coherent literary tradition in Greek epistolary writing, a tradition which, like that of other genres, has its foundational and seminal early texts. Cumulatively, such cases show Greek epistolary literature in a new light. Individually, it is harder to dismiss the letters of Euripides, for example, as forgeries, mere rhetorical exercises in *prosopopoiia*, or just typically bad ancient biography, when literary features such as intertextuality with an earlier collection of biographical letters attributed to Plato might reveal a more sophisticated authorial mind behind them. With this new perspective gained, we can appreciate that the author(s) of the letters of Euripides took a well-known pre-existing text, the letters of Plato, and composed a literary text in the same genre but with a different historical figure roughly contemporary with Plato as its subject. Such observations on individual texts in the tradition should also have a further cumulative effect on our view of the tradition as a whole, making scholars less hasty in dismissing texts within it or in making assumptions about the intentions behind their composition.

III. Summary of Contributions

Part I. *Epistolary Forms: Letters in Narrative, Letters as Narrative*

The volume opens with a section focusing on some of the earlier literary uses of the epistolary form. The epistolary texts treated in this section are, or are masquerading as, authentic letters, and are found in contexts in which one would expect to find letters: real or realistic epistolary communication, preserved for later readers because they are quoted within a larger narrative text, or because someone has collected the letters of a significant historical figure and published them together. Later in the volume, we come to more variable contexts for epistolary writing, and a set of authors for whom epistolary form need not entail an attempt at convincing an audience of the reality or even verisimilitude of the 'letter'. In the current section, however, we begin with letters between mythical characters employed within tragic plots, followed by letters between historical figures quoted within

historiographical narratives, and finally collections of letters supposedly by real historical authors. In all these texts, while the unique attributes of epistolary writing are exploited to varying extents, there is perhaps less exploitation of the epistolary form as a literary genre which can be altered, combined or mixed with other genres, and more emphasis on letters as artefacts or authentic transcripts of a written dialogue. The texts examined here include some of the earliest literary uses of epistolary form, written by authors who are already beginning to play with the emerging conventions of literary letters.

A. *Epistolary Writing in Extended Narratives: Letters in Euripides, Herodotus and Xenophon*

The first section introduces three authors of extended narratives who employ the letter within their texts—both as physical objects which can have various features and characteristics independently of what they say, and as 'quoted' or embedded texts which can clarify or complicate our reading of the larger surrounding text. The significance of both these ways in which a letter can interact with a surrounding narrative is illustrated by Patricia Rosenmeyer's chapter on letters in Euripides, which demonstrates that letters are signifiers by virtue of being physical objects, not only by virtue of what they say. Moreover, what letters signify on these two levels can be contradictory, the letter itself testifying against the author's words. Examples of letters that remain unopened but nevertheless signify within a narrative are adduced from Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and its illustration on vases, which frequently select the epistolary moment as one of the most crucial to the narrative. In examples where the letter *is* opened (*IA*, *Hipp.*), too, there is similar significance bound up with the letter's existence even before the opening and reading. Rosenmeyer argues that the letter's appearance onstage, like that of a messenger, informs the audience of something momentous long before the message is delivered; by contrast, the exits of letter and messenger from the stage always pass unnoticed. The circumstances in which a letter comes to be part of a narrative also reveal a great deal to its external audience before it is ever opened: letters found on bodies, for instance, should be read with extreme caution, but the conventional equation of letters with true communication trips up readers within the narrative even when they come to read letters found in such suspicious circumstances. Similarly, letters sent by elaborate secretive means signify much by their mode of delivery. Finally, examples of 'disobedient letters', which seem to signify one thing in the narrative but turn out contrary to expectations, add to the point that letters in narrative frequently have

expectations and significations attached for both internal and external readers separate from the significance of their content.

Two chapters on letters in historical narratives bring up some similar motifs, while also illustrating a relatively fast change in the perception and use of letters between our first extant historian, Herodotus, and his later colleague, Xenophon. One similarity between both historiographers and Euripides is the relatively rare appearance of letters, especially compared with some of the narratives containing letters in Section II of this volume. Only three letters in Herodotus and one each in all of Xenophon's historical writings and in his *Cyropaedia* are quoted in full, while others are summarised or quoted very briefly. In the Greek world of Herodotus and Euripides at least, writing a letter was not commonplace and the fact of a letter's existence alone was enough to signify something weighty.

This applies even more to the three quoted in full in Herodotus, which Angus Bowie shows as marking significant moments in history as well as crystallising some of the wider narrative's key themes: Herodotus' general ideology regarding the mutability of fortune, the importance of stratagem and personal desire in great political changes, and the cultural differences between Greeks and barbarians. In Herodotus' period, letters are of immense importance for conveying royal messages in the Near East while the Greeks are said to rely primarily on oral communication. The format of letters, however, appears in speeches and inscriptions as well, and the parallels between these three categories of communication—as well as the rarity of letters for royal, military, and bureaucratic communication in comparison with the Near East—suggest that the Greek concept of the letter was not yet fully formed in Herodotus' time.

By Xenophon's time, however, in spite of their relative scarcity in the texts themselves, letters are more commonplace. Deborah Gera points to many instances in Xenophon's writings where letters are mentioned casually in passing, and argues that it is highly likely that many more real-life letters are hiding behind various forms of the verb "to send" (*pempein*). Letters are an important part of Xenophon's real and fictional worlds: some of Xenophon's letters remind us of letters in Herodotus, Thucydides, or Ctesias, while others reflect more mundane concerns and details, pointing to a greater familiarity with written communication compared with the world of the earlier historiographers. Besides their more realistic communicative functions, letters are also sometimes employed in the *Cyropaedia* as a medium for colourful stories, or as one way of bringing such stories into the fictionalising but ostensibly historical narrative. The greater frequency of reference to letters in Xenophon, and especially the far greater variety in their content, purpose

within the narrative, and accompanying authentication devices, all point to an increasing consciousness of the many possibilities of the letter form in narrative between the 5th and 4th centuries BC.

B. *Correspondences of Historical Figures: Authentic and Pseudonymous*

The next set of three contributions addresses collections of letters by or attributed to a historical figure. Some of these letters may really be by their supposed author, while others are pseudonymous compositions, but what they all have in common is that they present themselves as authentic, whether in order to deceive (forgery) or as a kind of historical fiction.[47] Though the texts discussed in detail—the collections of letters attributed to Plato, the Epicureans, and Euripides—vary widely in date, content, and form, there is nevertheless much common ground. The overwhelming focus on the question of authenticity, and the lack of interest in the texts in cases where their authenticity is condemned, have presented a major obstacle to other work on these texts which are interesting as literature in their own right, and as texts in the history of epistolary literature.[48] Questions of authenticity are thus not pursued for their own sake, and only brought in where they are relevant to the reading of the text being considered.

Another common theme in this section is the question of coherent or internally consistent narrative created through collected epistolary texts. To what extent can a narrative be reconstructed from some of these collections, and to what extent is such a 'narrative' accidental on the part of the author(s) as opposed to the collector, if a collection has been transmitted in different sequences and contains letters composed in different periods by different authors? The extent to which a coherent narrative is found may stand in an inverse relation to the extent to which the individual letters are believable as authentic pieces of correspondence, and this relationship is also therefore an important theme. The different ways in which the authors employ epistolary form in individual letters and within a collection are illustrative of the development of the genre of the epistolary collection or book. The letters attributed to Plato receive the attention of two contributions, since they are so significant within the Greek epistolary tradition: even if none is authentic, the collection is probably the earliest free-standing epistolary

[47] The same is not true of e.g. Alciphron's or Aelian's letters, in which the gap between the real authors' names and the sometimes invented names of their fictional letter-writers flag up the texts' status as fictional literary compositions even more obviously.

[48] Cf. Wohl 1998 and Morrison forthcoming on the authenticity quest and alternative approaches.

text in Greek, and is certainly the most influential in this form. A final major common theme in these texts is the connection between epistolarity and a nexus of themes surrounding philosophy, teaching, and the intellectual life. The epistolary form in Greek, no doubt in part because of the early imprint of 'Plato' on it, is strongly associated with philosophers and intellectuals, and with their instruction of others through letters. The impact of this on the epistolary genre is discussed in these contributions, and in particular the connections between the letters attributed to Euripides and to Plato.

The chapter on Plato's *Letters* by Andrew Morrison considers the collection as a complete and unified whole, and asks how it constructs but also frustrates narrative. He reads the collection as we have it, as an epistolary collection put together by an ancient editor, arguing that the order and arrangement point to a deliberate conception of the collection as a literary work to be read in the order in which we have it, whether that order is to attributed to Thrasyllus or to an even earlier ancient editor. The lack of chronological order to the letters is not haphazard, but flexible enough to permit the editor different principles of sequences and juxtapositions in order to illustrate themes, such as the different stages in Plato's fluctuating relationship with the tyrant. The first two letters establish the common themes of tyranny and Plato's relationship with Dionysius II in the collection as well as the epistolary genre. The *Seventh Letter* is the heart of the collection in many ways; it refers to other letters not included in the collection that motivate actions and provide timely interventions for Plato in the narrative. Morrison then argues that the second half of the collection should be read closely with the first; he demonstrates that, although not essential to the narrative presented in the first half, these later letters encourage reinterpretation of the development of Plato's character and of his relationship with Dionysius II. This part of the collection plays with both the power and the limitations of the letter, and brings heavy dramatic irony to the entire narrative.

Pamela Gordon's chapter on the letters attributed to Epicurus and his followers argues that Epicurean letter writing was essential not only to the promulgation of Epicureanism and dissemination of wisdom through a scattered community, but also to the "invention" of the Epicurean. Like habitual or mundane letter writing, Epicureanism is presented in Diogenes Laertius, our source for most Epicurean letters, as an everyday activity. This chapter considers how letters can be used to praise or to slander, especially by means of accusations of inappropriate sexual license or gluttony. Unlike Epicurus' letters to Herodotus, Pythocles, and Menoeceus, the non-philosophical letters collected by Diogenes Laertius emphasise their

epistolarity with references to the act of writing, sending, or receiving. Gordon concludes that the strong connection between Epicurean biographical narratives and letter-writing must be due in part to the role letters played in Epicurus' actual interactions with students and followers, a kind of Epicurean "epistolary habit". The frequency of female correspondents is similarly attributed to historical reality, although it shades into fiction when allegedly purloined letters to courtesans are offered as exposés of Epicurean excess. The texts are presented as stolen or intercepted, purportedly adding a mark of authenticity and an aura of eavesdropping familiar from other epistolary fictions such as those of Ovid or Alciphron.

Poltera's chapter on the set of five letters attributed to Euripides, which scholars agree to be a product of the Second Sophistic, shows how certain conventions of the literary epistolary form took shape over the centuries. He demonstrates that the collection, rather than being a mere exercise in *ethopoieia*, actually shares a structural outline with other collections of fictitious letters attributed to well known authors, and which Holzberg includes under the general heading of "Greek epistolary novel", *der griechische Briefroman*:[49] the protagonist is a historical person; the action is confined to a short period of his life; and the writer speaks in the first person and reveals personal insights. This structual outline makes the epistolary collection closely resemble a biographical narrative. Indeed, our author takes pleasure in correcting the traditional image of Euripides in his 'lives', thus setting his text up as a rival to the non-epistolary *bioi*. We discover a man who is respected by the Athenians, friendly with Sophocles, and a victim of partisan attacks by Aristophanes and other poets, all in deliberate counterpart to the main literary tradition. Euripides' 'epistolary novel' also contains the main narrative techniques found in Plato's so-called 'Sicilian novel' (Pl. *Epp.* 1–8), thus harking back to the founding text for this particular mode of epistolary writing. Formally, a strong thematic relationship exists between the letters of Plato and the letters of Euripides. Both deal with the theme of an Athenian intellectual confronted with a tyrant, but in an almost diametrically opposed manner. Plato writes his letters after his forced return from Sicily to Athens and the definitive failure of his attempt to convince the young ruler Dionysios of his vision of the ideal Republic, while Euripides remains in Athens before traveling late in life to the court of Pella, to educate

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[49] Holzberg 1994. Other collections so named in this volume include the *Epistles* attributed to Chion of Heraclea, to Themistocles, Plato, Aeschines, Hippocrates, Socrates and the Socratics.

Archelaos. Poltera concludes that the author knows perfectly the 'rules' of the literary genre of epistolary novel and conforms to them. Whoever wrote this collection took great pains over its structure and literary qualities, composing a kind of learned *controversia*.

Part II. *Innovation and Experimentation in Epistolary Narratives*

The chapters in the second section showcase experimentation in epistolary form and narrative primarily in the Imperial period. The chronological and thematic divide between sections I and II is no coincidence: although it is not as simple a distinction as that between traditional and innovative uses of the epistolary form, there is nonetheless a gradual shift away from the use of realistic letters within longer texts or collections of letters towards a more varied use of epistolary narrative. This development of epistolary literature works on multiple levels. Across all kinds of epistolary texts we see a greater self-consciousness concerning the conventions and constraints of epistolary literature, as well as a similarly greater awareness of earlier writings in the same form. Even in texts which are superficially similar at a formal level—e.g. fictional letters 'quoted' within a longer narrative such as a novel are formally very similar to authentic letters quoted within a longer narrative such as a history—the form and content of the later epistolary material often become far less 'realistic' and far more self-conscious. Additionally, when the letters and surrounding narratives are both self-consciously fictional, there is greater freedom for the author to dispense with realistic considerations such as how he could have come by the text of a letter he is 'quoting' and how plausible the contents of the letter are *qua* real document. This means that the author can then include a far greater variety of embedded letters and variations on conventional epistolary devices. Such texts are also more apt to use an embedded letter in two ways simultaneously—as part of the narrative in itself and also as an adornment to the narrative which in fact retards the narrative in narratological terms and duplicates information which the reader can retrieve from the surrounding narrative. Others develop the epistolary form by combining or hybridising the 'letter collection' genre with other genres such as the dialogue or the novel, or by substituting letters all supposedly composed by a particular historical figure with a far more self-consciously fictional form such as the multiple fictional voices in the one-sided correspondences of Alciphron's *Letters*. Yet other authors adopt epistolary form to create a kind of short story in a single free-standing letter, thus exploiting the letter's narrative potential in a new way.

A. *Epistolarity and Other Narrative Forms: Generic Hybridity*

In the first section we see some of the more generically experimental or hybrid uses of epistolary form, beginning with the *Alexander Romance*. Most scholars agree that this text is at its core a narrative either containing or built around substantial quantities of pre-existing epistolary narratives attributed to Alexander and his correspondents. In his chapter, Tim Whitmarsh examines a group of Alexander letters preserved on a papyrus (*PSI* 12.85): three do not appear in any of our recensions of the *Alexander Romance*, while two others do. Whitmarsh reconsiders the circulation and tradition of these separate letters and the *Romance*. He discusses the scholarly quest by Reinhold Merkelbach, who used this papyrus to reconstruct a lost original *Alexander Romance* in the form of a novel in letters (*Briefroman*).[50] The first half of the chapter deals with Merkelbach's underlying assumptions, and what they mean for our understanding of the *Alexander Romance*. In a 'text' circulating in multiple forms as far back as our earliest knowledge of it, and possibly circulating orally before that, is it feasible to search for an 'original' using the traditional text-critical model of stemmas with their implications of hierarchy? Did the *Alexander Romance* ever have a single canonical form or was it always fluid? The messiness of the textual tradition and the fact that the *Alexander Romance* does not match up to modern aesthetic standards concerning, for example, coherence or chronological ordering of letters, should not make us 'edit' it into a text which is essentially a scholarly fantasy of a lost original. In the second half of his chapter, Whitmarsh deals with the multifarious Alexander epistolary traditions. Most of the letters in the *Alexander Romance* concern Alexander's relationship with Darius. Whitmarsh shows that both men skilfully exploit epistolary form as they engage in epistolary diplomacy. Letters are a prescriptive, not merely descriptive, form of words, and these correspondents try to control the frame of reference for their exchange by, among other things, redefining or refusing to accept the titles used by their correspondents.

Jason König's chapter continues the theme of epistolary experimentation by examining the generic interactions between sympotic and epistolary writing. König opens with general observations on the interactions between sympotic and epistolary genres in Plutarch, Achilles Tatius, Chariton, Athenaeus, and Lucian. These genres may seem *prima facie* alien to each other, based as they are respectively on social gatherings and on dis-

[50] Merkelbach 1977: 230–252.

tance communication. But both sympotic speech and letters claim to lay bare the soul of their author, while simultaneously relying on artifice and role-playing which subvert that claim. First examined are 'disruptive letters', letters delivered at symposia which destabilize the intimate communication of sympotic discourse but which often display deliberate ambiguity over which mode of communication is in fact more sincere. The second category discussed is that of letters which retrospectively narrate symposia and the related set of letters of invitation which anticipate the symposium. Here König argues that epistolary form is apt since the letters convey information from travelers to those at a distance who cannot experience them. As with the first category, these letters oscillate between an expected epistolary intimacy and a sense of distance. König then turns to Alciphron's third book of letters, *Letters of Parasites*, emphasizing Alciphron's engagement with the sympotic literature tradition, and his playful rewriting of letter types. König shows that the same elite letter-writing practices occur from a lower point on the social ladder, as Alciphron invents descriptions of symposia voiced by parasites and courtesans. Epistolary form, with its assumption of unmediated truth, is used here to puncture pretensions and show the messiness and discomfort of real sympotic situations as experienced by the disenfranchised. Yet the generic artifice of letters can never be ignored; even the misery of the lower classes is manipulated for literary use, and these 'social documents' are masterpieces of epistolary fiction.

Slater's contribution focuses on another epistolary generic hybrid: Lucian's *Saturnalia*, a heteroglossic collection of dialogues and laws, with a final section consisting of four letters in disparate voices. Slater briefly sets the letters in the context of the whole work, but then focuses on how the letters both exemplify and justify the *Saturnalia* festival. The epistolary part of *Saturnalia* imitates in miniature the formal features of many letter collections, both literary and authentic; but the joke is that the correspondence is with a god, Cronus, who is asked by the first letter writer, an anonymous poor man, to implement more permanently the temporary social inversions and wealth-redistribution of his festival. Cronus' response is a far cry from the official replies to petitions familiar from royal correspondence and epistolary handbooks;[51] he emphasises his powerlessness in the current Olympian regime, and says he can do nothing to help other than write another letter himself to the offending party. The first pair of letters motivates the second, as Cronus keeps his promise to write to 'the rich' collectively, who respond

[51] See the suggestions in the epistolary handbooks, collected in Malherbe 1988.

in turn. Cronus' epistolary incompetence continues, as the rich reveal themselves to be far more experienced in dealing with such complaints. They claim to have considered carefully the demands of the poor put to them in writing through Cronus, but rebut them all by exposing dishonesty and inaccuracy in the letter-writer's (i.e. Cronus') representation of the situation. The letter collection is carefully structured and balanced, representing in a metaliterary manner the Saturnalian inversions which are its subject. Epistolary form is highly pertinent, satirizing real correspondence in the bureaucracy of the empire and its tendency to be far better at documenting and recording than at achieving anything concrete.

B. *Embedded Letters in Longer Fictions*

This section is concerned with longer narrative texts which contain embedded letters, formally similar to the use of letters by the historiographers discussed in the earlier section. Indeed, there is much continuity in these later (2nd–3rd century AD) uses of embedded letters, but also significant development and expansion in their use, in part owing to the fictional nature of the containing narratives. We also see in these texts a more narratologically complex and sophisticated use of embedded letters, as befits those qualities in the containing narratives themselves.

Silvio Bär's chapter further develops the picture of Lucian as an author interested in epistolary narrative. He focuses on Lucian's *Verae Historiae* which contains one letter, written by Odysseus to Calypso, and read by the first-person narrator, Lucian. While this letter has traditionally been interpreted primarily as a comical inversion of the Odyssean storyline and characterization, Bär examines its narratological and metapoetic significance within the *Verae Historiae*, as well as its importance in the broader context of Imperial prose narratives. First, Bär argues that Odysseus' letter ties in closely with the agenda set out by the narrator in the proem, since both the narrator and Odysseus are depicted as storytellers and liars (1.3–4). The equation between Odysseus and Lucian, however, means that the letter cannot be used in its traditional role of authentication device (*Beglaubigungsapparat*); rather, as it is written by Odysseus the liar and narrated by Lucian the (false) storyteller, it works as a device of double uncertainty. Bär then proposes that the letter might work as a authentication device on another level. In addition to equating himself with Odysseus, the narrator also connects Odysseus to Homer, and Homer back to himself (i.e. to the narrator of the tale). Homer was considered problematic by authors in the Imperial period, as the Homeric epics were on the one hand authoritative reference texts, but on the other hand not written in Attic prose. The

tripartite equation of Homer—Odysseus—Lucian in the *Verae Historiae* allows the narrator to suggest a way of coming to terms with Homer. Odysseus' letter suggests that Homeric figures can speak in Atticizing prose as well as Homeric hexameters, and hence ties in with Lucian's 'new' *Odyssey* written in prose. By asking *Lucian* to take his letter to Calypso while Homer remains on the Island of the Blessed, Odysseus elects Lucian as a 'new' Homer. In this way, Bär argues that the letter acts as a authentication device, as it verifies Lucian's ability to create an epic tale in Attic prose.

Ian Repath's chapter concerns the use of letters in Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, which contains two rare instances of one member of the central couple in the novel writing to the other (the only other is Chariton 4.4.7–10). The narrative set-up of the novel, with Cleitophon narrating his past adventures as he experienced them, means that the letter of Leucippe, who is thought dead, has a stunning impact on the reader, just as it had on Cleitophon at the time, and on the plot of the novel. The letter signifies by its existence that she is alive, and is a rhetorically adept piece of writing whose aim may not be as straightforward as it seems and which elicits types of reading from Cleitophon which reflect and, through the fascination with her violent treatment, problematise the reader's reading of the novel. This letter is particularly important because it seems to allow an unmediated glimpse into the true feelings of a character who is both silenced by the plot, at this point of the novel and frequently, and who is given little direct speech by Cleitophon. However, readers have been misled by the apparent status of Leucippe's letter as a written text, since, rather than having separate identities, letters in this novel are embroiled inextricably in the fact that Cleitophon is the narrator, in what he narrates, and in the way he narrates it. Achilles Tatius exploits many of the *topoi* associated with epistolary form, and confronts his reader with fundamental problems of trying to read written texts whose authority and believability are disturbingly slippery. When combined with questions of intratextuality, intertextuality, and gendering, these letters are a fundamental part of Achilles Tatius' narrative strategy and, with careful and suspicious reading, help us to understand Achilles Tatius' attitude to his narrator, his reader, and his genre.

The third and final contribution to this section on letters embedded in longer fictions is Dimitri Kasprzyk's chapter on Philostratus' biography of Apollonius of Tyana, which includes many letters purportedly written by or to the main character. Kasprzyk argues that these letters are manipulated by Philostratus in different ways and for a particular purpose. First, letters of recommendation (e.g. 2.40–41, from the Indian king Phraotes to Iarchas; 6.31, from Apollonius to Demetrius) are stripped of their practical

function in order to underline the philosophical notion of the supremacy of wisdom and virtue. Second, letters are used to lend credibility to both Apollonius' and Philostratus' accounts, hence connecting the primary narrator and the protagonist. The narrator achieves these results by manipulating the structure of the letters and connecting the narrative of the letters with other sources. Through the use of multiple narrators and indirect speech, the sources are blurred and Philostratus emerges as the only reliable narrator, superimposing his own voice on those of the secondary narrators. At 6.27, for example, Philostratus duplicates Apollonius' earlier story of a satyr, hence verifying Apollonius' story regarding the existence of satyrs, and then trumps Apollonius by representing himself as the ultimate master of truth. At 1.23–24, parts of Apollonius' letter to Scopelian regarding the fate of the Eretrians are fused with other accounts narrated by Damis, the Eretrians, and Philostratus himself. These accounts serve to create a close reciprocity between Philostratus and Apollonius, but ultimately reveal the control Philostratus maintains over not just the epistolary passages, but also the entire narrative.

C. *Short Stories in Epistolary Form*

The next two contributions each focus on a narrative contained entirely within a single letter: epistolary form is used in these instances as a medium for an uncommon literary phenomenon at the time—the self-contained short story. Up to this point, authors using epistolary form either embedded letters within a longer, non-epistolary narrative, or brought multiple letters together to form a collection. But in the case of the epistolary short story, the letter as narrative medium is exploited in a new way. In the absence of an established ancient form comparable to the modern short story, the epistolary medium seems to have been chosen as a suitable envelope; it was a small but very innovative step on the part of an ancient author to move from using letters to convey partial narratives within collections or longer narrative texts to allowing an individual letter to expand to convey the entire narrative.

The first example of this innovation takes the odd shape of a ghost story in epistolary form. John Morgan's chapter concerns this ghost story, the first piece in the collection of *paradoxa* attributed to Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of the emperor Hadrian. The story, whose opening lines have been lost, is written in the form of a letter from a local administrator, Hipparchus, to his superior, Arrhidaeus, as part of a report of events occuring in the city under his jurisdiction. It describes a young woman, Philinnion, who returned to her parents' house six months after her death to make love to their guest,

Machates. Morgan explores the significance of the epistolary form and the intertextual resonances of this text, arguing that the issue of credibility is expressed both at the level of the content of the story (paradoxography offers a truth stranger than fiction) and at the level of the epistolary form (a junior official tries to provide a dispassionate and systematic summary of events to his superior). A gradual process of discovery concerning the identity of the female who visits Machates at night is required to provide coherence at both levels, and legitimizes the disjunction between the *récit* and the *histoire*, in narratological terms. Morgan's chapter examines the correspondences between Phlegon's account of the story and another version of the same story found in Proclus to fill in missing information about the opening of Phlegon's narrative, including epistolary formulae and the identities of the sender and the addressee.

Owen Hodkinson's chapter on the tenth letter attributed to Aeschines, another short story in epistolary form, asks why its author might have chosen this medium for his narrative. Despite the form superficially having little impact on the story itself, various details point to the integral nature of the epistolary form. The text includes a direct reference to letter form ("I write to you …"); it follows epistolary handbooks' prescriptions regarding style, brevity, and tone;[52] it reveals a similar style to the other letters of the collection attributed to Aeschines; it sets up the dramatic occasion of a "letter home"; and we find allusions to this letter in the later epistolographer Aristaenetus.[53] These details all suggest that the author clearly wrote to be included in a tradition of fictional and pseudonymous letters. Hodkinson asserts that the choice of epistolary form was not, as might be expected from common earlier uses of the form, to claim authenticity or connect it to the historical Aeschines. Rather, the author chose epistolary form because it had become a favourite medium for pseudo-historical and other fictions in the second century AD. Ps.-Aeschines 10 is thus a historical fiction, a fictionalized first-person letter narrative based on certain events of a famous man's life, shaped with thematic and narrative coherence to resemble a novel. Hodkinson goes on to explore the features of this narrative which connect it to the genre of the ancient novel. A closer connection than previously noted is then suggested between the novel and Greek fictional letters in general.

52 Cf. Malherbe 1988, esp. 16–19: Ps.-Demetrius *De Elocutione*.

53 On Aristaenetus, see most recently the article by Höschele (2012), a version of which was originally presented at the 2008 'Fragmented Narrative' conference. See also P. Bing and R. Höschele (trans. and eds.), *Aristaenetus: Text and Translation* (*Themes from Greco-Roman Antiquity*), Atlanta, forthcoming.

The peaking of the fictional, the sophisticated, and the self-conscious narrative around the second century AD in these two forms, epistolary fiction and the novel, is thus no coincidence, but rather evidence of a close generic connection between them.

Part III. *Jewish and Early Christian Epistolary Narratives*

The volume concludes with a look towards two important Greek letter-writing cultures within the Roman Empire, namely those of the Jews and the Christians. We offer these contributions in order to show something of the similarity between these and mainstream Greek literary culture at the time in their employment of epistolary narratives, and thus to suggest ways in which the themes and approaches of the volume as a whole can bring something to the study of Jewish and Christian epistolary narratives, and *vice versa*. All these kinds of text have their own scholarship but it is generally kept separate along disciplinary lines, to the detriment of all disciplines. These differences make it worthwhile to keep these chapters in a specific section, since the varieties within the Greek epistolary tradition examined so far are largely explained in terms of the expanding use of letters (both real and literary) and the consequent developments in their forms, rather than looking to any outside influences; in this last section, a mixture of all these foregoing traditions with the distinct Jewish or Christian epistolary traditions is used to explain the narrative forms and uses of epistolarity in the texts under discussion.

Ryan Olson's chapter focuses on the first-century AD Jewish Roman historian Josephus, who includes hundreds of letters in his works. Josephus reflects common Greek literary convention and practice, but innovates upon it by amalgamating epistolary approaches from other genres, refracting Greek uses of letters through a Jewish lens. Josephus demonstrates the notion that letters manifest many of the ideas, institutions, and networks that comprise a culture. While Josephus' *Jewish War* and *Vita* employ epistolary material in ways that are strikingly similar to what we have seen in other examples from Greek literature, the ideas and institutions of early imperial Rome were of course different from those of Judaea. Nowhere is this more evident than in warfare, where letters could be an important tool whose literary record reveals ideas and practices surrounding Roman and Judaean military operations. This chapter examines quoted and reported letters in Josephus' narratives about the war between Rome and Judaea in AD 66–70. Although prompting the use of the same communications technology, the circumstances in which letters are used and the content conveyed by the

letters themselves—fewer from the Roman side than from the Judaean—indicate differences in institutions, strategy, training, and modes of engagement that proved decisive in the war. Olson shows that, in addition to being a device deployed by a former general on the battlefield to produce tactical effects and off the battlefield to produce literary ones, letters construct a veneer of similarity over significant cultural differences, differences that produced real effects in the lives of Jews and Romans.

The chapter on Christian letters emphasises the centrality of letters in constructing and maintaining a communal identity of a scattered community, including the use of epistolary narratives as a lasting and widely disseminated record of a shared experience rather than an immediate means of communicating news. Jane McLarty examines two letters from the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*: the martyrdom of Polycarp, and the letter of the churches of Lyons and Vienne. She explores how the use of epistolary form accentuates the emotive appeal of these accounts, and argues that the epistolary narratives self-consciously seek to build and consolidate the community to which the sufferings of the martyrs bear witness. The meta-narrative that informs these presentations of Christian suffering is Paul's *Letter to the Philippians*, which introduces three themes that recur in these martyrdom letters: first, commonality between believers, maintained by the letter itself, which informs them of the believers' sufferings and of the meanings with which they invest them; second, the body's public proclamation through its suffering and the striving to see that suffering through to eventual death, which is compared to the striving for glory at a sporting contest; and third, the desire to emulate the martyrs' proclamation that is awakened in the other believers by the knowledge of their suffering, again promoted by the letter form. The letter works towards the solidarity and cohesion of the Christian community in the face of hostility and geographical separation. It is a summons to witness and the sharing of 'good news', an affirmation and an argument for endurance. The letters build not only the receiving but also the sending community, who know that their brothers and sisters across the Roman world by this means become, as Paul would put it, "sharers in their suffering".[54] A particular event on a certain day in Lyons becomes a spectacle that escapes the bonds of time and space; whenever the letters are (re)read, they display (again) the victory of the martyrs over their persecutors.

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54 E.g. *Philippians* 1.7.

The chapters to follow span a large chronological and generic range, and attempt to provide an overview and introduction to the vast number of letters and letter collections available in the Greek world from earliest times to later antiquity. While the volume may include some epistolary narratives at the cost of others, no such undertaking can please all readers; it is the hope of the editors that it will at least encourage further discussion of these fascinating and underservedly neglected texts.

PART I

EPISTOLARY FORMS:
LETTERS IN NARRATIVE, LETTERS AS NARRATIVE

A. *Epistolary Writing in Extended Narratives: Letters in Euripides, Herodotus, Xenophon*

THE APPEARANCE OF LETTERS ON STAGES AND VASES

Patricia A. Rosenmeyer

I. Introduction[*]

In 1970, in an issue of the journal *Yale French Studies*, the semiotician Tzvetan Todorov explored the use of letters in Choderlos de Laclos' eighteenth-century epistolary novel *Dangerous Liaisons*.[1] Todorov claimed that:

> epistolary messages have a double meaning. On the one hand, they mean what the sentences that constitute them mean, and each letter says something different from the other. On the other hand, they possess a connotation, identical in the mind of all, which is that of the "letter" as a social phenomenon, and this connotation is in addition, or even in opposition, to the literal message of each letter.

Todorov then identified three specific connotations of letters as social phenomena in Laclos' novel: first, a letter signifies news; second, a letter implies that one is on intimate terms with the person with whom one corresponds; and third, a letter is based on an assumption of authenticity, or, in other words, as opposed to a message that is delivered orally, the letter asserts a sure proof.

While scholarship on epistolary narrative has come a long way since 1970, Todorov's observations on the multiple meanings of epistolary messages remain a useful starting point for discussion. Many of the essays in Ruth Morello and Andrew Morrison's anthology *Ancient Letters* (2007), for example, focus on letters precisely as social phenomena. My study will develop a slightly different angle on Todorov's categorization: I am interested in the letter not just as a social phenomenon, but also as a physical phenomenon.

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[*] I am grateful to Owen Hodkinson for the original invitation to present this paper as part of a conference on "Fragmented Narrative" at the University of Wales, Lampeter, in 2008; the comments of the participants, as well as those of anonymous readers for the Press, helped to improve my arguments. Further, with specific reference to the section on material culture, I thank Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, Oliver Taplin, and John Oakley for invaluable advice, as well as Michael Turner and Larissa Bonfante for assistance in arranging permissions.

[1] Todorov 1970: 113–126; quotation from p. 115.

As another scholar working on Laclos puts it, "that the letter *is* can be far more weighty than what it means".[2] Or, to return to more familiar classical material, William Fitzgerald argues eloquently in Morello and Morrison's volume that, "as *pignus*, the letter acquires a materiality that takes it one step beyond the speech act it performs".[3] Fitzgerald refers specifically to Pliny's correspondence, dividing letters into what they report (content) and what they convey (connotation). Pliny's friend Ferox writes that he has no time for his studies; that cannot be, replies Pliny, since his letter is clearly the work of a man who is studious (Pliny *Ep.* 7.13). Fitzgerald points out that, "as the product of *studium*, Ferox's letter is the thing itself, and cancels its own statement".[4] The letter is not just proof of the writer's studiousness, but the actual equivalent of making time for studies. So what the letter *is*–i.e. intellectual work—cancels out what it *says*–that its author has no time for educating himself. Here Pliny seems to value the letter's testimony above the writer's. Through its connotations, the letter actually testifies against its author's words: the connotations of this letter are in opposition to its contents.

Ferox's letter gained weight, as it were, once it was opened and read by its addressee, Pliny. But a letter can also testify to something before it is opened: a sealed letter has power even in silence, as a physical object. It can function in its narrative without needing to be read. In Laclos' *Dangerous Liaisons*, the nobleman Valmont sends the same letter four times to the woman he is trying to seduce. He predicts correctly that his victim, the virtuous Présidente de Tourvel, will return his letters unopened and unread, and he boasts that he saves both time and energy by leaving the letter undated and simply slipping it into a new envelope each time. He repeatedly resends the same letter because what is critical to his success at this initial level of seduction is that the Présidente accept the letter, not that she read it.[5] Valmont's persistence pays off when the Présidente finally accepts his letter in order to avoid further scandal—or so she tells herself. Her acceptance of that letter, of course, is the first step in her eventual downfall. As in the case of Fitzgerald's Pliny, the Présidente's response can be understood to reveal something different from what it actually says: she writes back to Valmont that he must stop sending letters; but the very act of writing back reveals

2 Meltzer 1982: 515–529; quotation from p. 519.
3 Fitzgerald 2007: 191–210; quotation from p. 195.
4 Fitzgerald 2007: 195.
5 Meltzer 1982: 521–522.

her complicity in the relationship, in spite of the professed desire to break off the connection.[6] Epistolarity here defines itself through the appearance of the letter, not through epistolary content.

Laclos, Fitzgerald, and Todorov explore the tension between levels of narrative: explicit and implicit, content and connotation. I will explore a related tension, namely that between the connotations of an unopened envelope—the epistolary token—and its contents. The presence of a letter in a narrative generates specific expectations in its readers, both internal and external. What happens if the letter is never opened? What happens if the expectations raised at the appearance of a letter are later contradicted by the act of reading the letter, i.e. suppose the unopened letter is 'misread'? My inquiries center on the physical nature of the sealed letter, the envelope as talisman, because I think that all literary letters retain a sense of materiality that is crucial to the functioning of the epistolary genre. To support my arguments, I will choose examples primarily from Euripides, including the tragedies themselves as well as visual narratives from material sources (i.e., pottery, cinerary urns) that may have been informed by performances of the plays.

II. *Iphigenia in Tauris*: A Letter in Hand

Some of the most familiar sealed envelopes, or, to be more precise, folded tablets, in Classical literature are found in the plays of Euripides: the two Iphigenia tragedies (*Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*), *Hippolytus*, and the fragmentary *Palamedes*.[7] In all four dramas, a letter appears on stage and plays a crucial role in the narrative, changing the direction of the plot even when it is intercepted (*IA*), misread (*H*) or never unsealed (*IT*). Since we have no contemporary textual evidence for the staging of ancient plays, or for the impact that epistolary tableaux might have had on a contemporary audience, we can turn to the ancient vase painters for some insights about the visual and narrative force of letters on the dramatic stage. I do not, of course, mean to suggest that the vases illustrate any specific dramatic staging of Euripides; we have moved beyond the polarizing "philodramatist" vs. "iconocentric" debate that Oliver Taplin describes so well in his introduction

[6] Todorov 1967: 32. I am reminded of Catullus 83, in which the poet is happy with Lesbia's insults: "si nostri oblita taceret, / sana esset …" (83.3–4); her anger means that she still cares: "hoc est, uritur et loquitur" (83.6).

[7] For a general discussion of letters in tragedy, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 61–97.

to *Pots and Plays*.[8] Some artistic representations of narratives involving letters may be wholly independent of textual sources and based on a uniquely material discourse system; others may be informed by plays to such an extent that familiarity with a staged performance deepens and enriches the artwork's meaning for the viewer.[9] But I would suggest that in all cases, since material culture excludes orality from its methods of communication, the effect of the physical object stands out in starker contrast than it would in a more mixed medium. Vase paintings that include epistolary material display how letters function kinetically in their own visual narrative, without the complication of verbally expressed content.

We turn first to artistic representations of the story of Iphigenia in exile among the Taurians. This first set of images is perhaps the least vexed in terms of the relationship between word and image, since Euripides himself invented the story of Orestes and Pylades washing up on the shores of the Black Sea and eventually recognizing (and being recognised by) Iphigenia by means of a letter.[10] Thus any artistic rendering of this myth must ultimately derive from Euripides' play. Taplin points out that the *IT* was extremely popular in the fourth century, so that it is highly likely that most artists who depicted this story, and most viewers who viewed their representations, had actually seen a performance of the Euripidean tragedy.[11] In addition, almost all the vases that depict Iphigenia among the Taurians pay special attention to two specific objects which were most likely stage props in performance: the cult statue of Artemis, and the letter.[12]

The physical setting for the vases under discussion here is a shrine to Artemis, where Iphigenia encounters two Greek strangers; she must sacrifice one of them, but asks the other man to carry a letter back to her brother Orestes in Argos. There are no examples of the story in Attic black-figure, but in Attic red-figure we have one known representation: a calyx-krater by the Iphigenia Painter, dated to the 380s BC, and now in Ferrara (Figure 1).[13]

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[8] Taplin 2007: 22–26. Other works useful for thinking about the connections between vase painting and theater performance are Reverman 2010 and Steiner 2007.

[9] Taplin 2007: 25.

[10] On the myth, see Cropp 2000: 43–56; Taplin 2007: 149–150.

[11] Taplin 2007: 25.

[12] Taplin 2007: 150.

[13] Museo Nazionale di Spina T 1145 (3032); see also 1440.1 in Beazley 1963, and the entry for "Iphigenia" in *LIMC* (vol. 5.1, pp. 714–715; illustrations in vol. 5.2, p. 469). The vase is discussed in the context of Euripides' play in Taplin 2007: 152–153; Shapiro 1994: 170–171; and Cambitoglou 1975: 56–66. All subsequent textual references for the *LIMC* "Iphigeneia" entry can be found in volume 5.1 of *LIMC*, pp. 706–734, while the relevant plates are in volume 5.2, pp. 466–482.

Figure 1: Attic red-figure calyx-krater. Ca. 380 BC. The Iphigenia Painter. Museo Nazionale di Spina T 1145 (3032), Ferrara. Photo: Alfredo Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

The central image on the vase is Artemis' shrine containing the cult statue. Iphigenia, elegantly dressed, stands to the left of it, holding the temple key with a string of beads hanging from it in her left hand—the conventional sign of a priestess—and the letter in her right; on the other side of the shrine stands a temple attendant. Pylades, seated near a rock, reaches out for the letter, and both he and Orestes, reclining in the foreground, are shown with the accoutrements of a traveler: distinctive hat, a cloak, a spear that can double as a walking stick, and not much else in the way of garments. Also in the scene is King Thoas, richly dressed, being fanned by an attendant,

Figure 2: Red-figure Apulian Bell-krater. Ca. 350 BC. Attributed to the Painter of Boston 00.348. *Royal-Athena Galleries: 1,000 Years of Ancient Greek Vases II* (2010) no. 124. Private collection, Texas.

a good example of how vase painters could situate different temporal stages in one visual plane; in Euripides' version, Thoas does not enter the scene until much later (*IT* 1153–1489), but here the artist offers viewers a synoptic or simultaneous narrative.[14]

Two other vases of this same scene, both kraters from Apulia dated to the mid-fourth c. BC, one formerly in New York and the other now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, reveal great consistency in iconography, focusing on the sealed letter that Iphigenia holds in her right hand, and freezing the moment just before its recitation and the eventual recognition scene.[15] The New York bell-krater (Figure 2), attributed to the Painter of

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14 As Stansbury-O'Donnell argues (2011: 65), "Greek artists [...] frequently include more in a picture than could have existed at a single moment of action, allowing for a more complex interpretation of the picture".

15 In addition, another Apulian vase dated to approximately the same time (340 BC), a calyx-krater attributed to the circle of the Darius Painter (Moscow 504; *LIMC* Iph. 22 on p. 714), similarly shows Iphigenia standing inside the temple building near the statue of Artemis, holding the priestess' key in her left hand and handing over the letter to Pylades standing outside on the left; for discussion, see Cambitoglou 1975: 61–62; Trendall and Webster 1971:

Boston 00.348,[16] reveals similar iconography of the temple structures and the participants (Iphigenia with the letter and temple key; Orestes and Pylades as heroic nudes with traveling gear), although the background appears more crowded: Artemis is shown arriving in a chariot pulled by two panthers, and a youth holds a cat or a weasel over a ritual wash-basin. The krater in St. Petersburg (Figure 3)[17] replaces the feline figure with Orestes, leaning wearily on the basin.[18] The scholarship on this vase is divided as to whether Iphigenia here holds a letter in her right hand, or whether we see simply a badly drawn hand.[19] Indeed, the St. Petersburg krater shows a Pylades who does not obviously respond to Iphigenia as he did in the previous two vases: here he stands listening with his right hand on his hip, rather than reaching out for the letter. But, as will become clearer in the examples to follow, the iconography of Iphigenia handing the letter to Pylades does allow for some individual variation in the details: Iphigenia always holds the letter in her right hand, but her palm can face up or down; Pylades can be shown reaching out for the letter or just leaning on his spear, attentive yet unreactive.[20] In the case of the St. Petersburg krater, I would therefore still argue for the presence of a letter, however indistinct.

III.3.30a. A final example of this type is listed as *LIMC* Iph. 24 on p. 711, a volute krater from Bari, attributed also to the Darius Painter or his circle.

16 See Taplin 2007: 154–155. The vase was formerly in the Kluge Collection in Charlottesville VA (V9105); it then was featured in several gallery catalogues (Atlantis Antiquities, *Greek and Roman Art* [1990] #5; *Royal Athena Vase Catalogue* #124) before being sold in 2011 to a private client in Texas. *LIMC* describes it as an Apulian krater; see Iph. 21 *LIMC* p. 715, plate on p. 469. I thank John Oakley for helping me track down these references and arranging permission to publish the image from the Royal Athena Galleries.

17 Red-figure Apulian krater by The Baltimore Painter, Southern Italian, ca. 330–310 BC, invoice number B-1715 in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; also catalogued as Iph. 23 *LIMC*, p. 715, plate on p. 470. Cf. Cambitoglou 1975: 60 n. 29, who attributes this vase to the Rouen Painter. The image is reproduced by kind permission of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

18 Taplin 2007: 154 reads the repeated representation of the lustral bowl as a hint that the bowl might have been an onstage prop during performance.

19 The debate is briefly discussed in Cambitoglou 1975: 60–61, who does not believe that Iphigenia holds a letter in her hand; Trendall and Webster 1971 do not mention a letter in their description of the scene, but cf. *LIMC* p. 715: "elle […] relève son voile tout en tenant le message".

20 Iphigenia is represented holding the letter with her palm facing up in five of the pieces discussed here (*LIMC* Iph. 20, 22, 23, 24, 25), and in two instances with her palm down (*LIMC* Iph. 19, 21); Pylades appears reaching for the letter in five pieces (*LIMC* Iph. 19, 20, 21, 22, 25) and unreactive in two instances (*LIMC* Iph. 23, 24).

Figure 3: Red-figure Apulian krater. 330–310 BC. The Baltimore Painter. The State Hermitage Museum, inv. B-1715, St. Petersburg. Image copyright @ The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

One of the most striking representations of Iphigenia's letter appears on a red-figure neck amphora attributed to the Libation Painter (Figure 4), made in Campania in the third quarter of the fourth c. BC, now in the Nicholson Museum of the University of Sydney.[21] The obverse of the vase shows Iphigenia handing over the letter to Pylades—but interestingly Orestes is not visible here.[22] The tension of the two figures caught in the moment before Pylades grasps the letter is unbroken by any distracting details—only the essential players are shown. Iphigenia again holds the beaded key in her left hand, and in her right the letter tablet is clearly visible. She wears a diadem, a long cloak, and a purple veil pulled over her head. Pylades is nude except for the critical few items identifying him as a traveler; he holds out his right hand to take the letter. The letter itself is the focus of our gaze. Its central placement in the scene, and the two hands reaching toward it, draw the viewers' eyes directly to it. The altar shown between them is situated in front of the temple of Artemis, which is alluded to by the Ionic columns flanking the scene. The altar has a fire burning on it, and streaks of yellow on the sides may indicate the blood of earlier sacrifices—animal or human.[23] If human, it is a nice narrative touch, since Orestes' presence is hinted at through the fate the unknowing Iphigenia has in store for him: sacrifice on this very altar. Altars occur frequently on tragedy related pots, but this particular altar resonates more deeply in that it evokes in the mind of the viewer what is supposed to happen next, but what will be wonderfully replaced by the emotional recognition scene to follow.[24]

Thus far we have considered representations of the moment when Iphigenia is about to hand over the letter; she holds it, Pylades stands nearby ready to receive it, and Orestes may or may not be visible off to one side. We possess one tantalizing piece of evidence that suggests another option for this scene: on a lost vase once housed in the Buckingham Collection, now

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21 The vase is a Campanian neck amphora (ca. 350–325 BC) attributed to the Libation Painter, Nicholson Museum NM 51.17. I thank Michael Turner, Senior Curator at the Nicholson Museum, for helping me obtain permission to publish. The vase is also listed as Iph. 25 *LIMC* p. 715, plate on p. 471; see also Cambitoglou 1975: 56–66; and Trendall and Webster 1971: III.3.30.

22 Cambitoglou 1975: 57 offers two reasons for Orestes' absence: either the narrow space of the panel on the neck-amphora restricted the number of figures the artist could include, or this vase is an "autonomous artistic expression independent from the stage".

23 See the website for the vase in Sydney: www.usyd.edu.au/…/nicholson/red.shtml.

24 On the frequency of altars on pots, see Taplin 2007: 41; on the role of an action or thing in evoking a particular reaction on the part of the viewer, see Stansbury-O'Donnell 2011: 65: "the single action can easily evoke moments just before or after in the mind of the viewer".

Figure 4: Campanian neck amphora. 350–325 BC. Attributed to the Libation Painter. Nicholson Museum NM 51.17, Sydney.

preserved only in a sketch, Pylades is shown actually grasping the tablet as Iphigenia offers it to him.[25] According to a sketch of the missing vase, Iphigenia holds the temple key in her left hand, the letter tablet in her right. Again, she is elegantly dressed while the travelers are nude. Orestes leans nearby on a basin, next to Pylades, and the architectural background is quite detailed. But the letter is the undisputed focus of the scene, centered on the vase as Iphigenia and Pylades both grasp it in their right hands, at the precise moment of transfer. The viewer's gaze is drawn immediately to the letter tablet, which is framed by the two figures. It would be interesting to know if other vases, no longer extant, also showed this specific moment which, at least according to Euripides' staging, marks the beginning of the plot's resolution. It is certainly a highly charged way to represent the scene, since although the artist chose a monoscenic narrative depicting one moment in the story, most viewers would immediately think forward to the imminent and intensely suspenseful *anagnorisis* scene. Thus the letter exchange both moves the plot forward, showing both action and reaction, but also lessens the drama, in that it removes the ambiguity of whether Pylades will accept the letter, a fact left unresolved in the compositions discussed previously.[26]

If the lost Buckingham vase pushed the envelope, so to speak, to pinpoint the moment when Pylades takes the letter from Iphigenia's hands, we can turn for further elaboration to two Etruscan alabaster urns from the Hellenistic period.[27] While there is a substantial gap in time and context between the fourth-century vases discussed above and these later funerary monuments, and while we should therefore be somewhat cautious about assuming any kind of direct link back to dramatic performance or expectation of consistency, it is still productive to read the later representations in dialogue with the narrative elements of the Buckingham vase. The first

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25 Cambitoglou 1975: 64 n. 61 has bibliography on this vase, including Webster 1967: 159, and Trendall and Webster 1971: 95. See Iph. 20 in *LIMC* pp. 714–715. The original publication of the drawing is appended to Gerhard 1849 as plate 12 (on p. 322).

26 I thank Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell for drawing my attention to this point.

27 Of related interest are two relief plaques in Pisidian Termessos, dated to ca. 120 BC, probably originally part of a temple decoration, which show two episodes of the legend of Iphigenia (*LIMC* Iph. 5 on pp. 710–711): one plaque shows Artemis holding a deer, with Iphigenia standing beside her, head in hand; the other shows a draped female figure, possibly holding an object (the letter) in her hand, between two other figures: another woman similarly draped in *chiton* and *himation*, and a man who stands leaning on a spear, with his *himation* tossed back over his shoulder. Staehler 1968: 280–289 identifies the figures as Iphigenia, Pylades, and a female servant, but because the object in Iphigenia's hand is so indistinct, I do not include it in my survey.

Figure 5: Etruscan alabaster cinerary urn from Chiusi. Ca. 200 BC. New York University Collection X.002, New York. L. Bonfante, *Classical Antiquities at New York University* (Rome, 2006) no. 42.

urn, dated by Larissa Bonfante to ca. 100 BC, and found near Chiusi, is now housed at New York University (Figure 5).[28] The cinerary urn's carved surface represents the exact moment of epistolary transfer by doubling the crucial object: it shows *both* Iphigenia *and* Pylades with a letter. Orestes, resting his head in his hand in a gesture of despair, sits slumped on an altar between Iphigenia on the left and Pylades on the right. Iphigenia reaches forward with her right hand, holding out a letter; Pylades looks over towards the two, and holds a letter at his side in his right hand. The draped clothing of another female figure appears at Pylades' right, just where the alabaster breaks off, but the detail is too fragmentary to interpret further. The general atmosphere appears threatening: two severed heads with fillets dangling down hover over Orestes in the background, possibly

[28] New York University Collection, X.002; no. 42 in Bonfante 2006: 128–130; Iph. Etr. 22 *LIMC* p. 732, plate on p. 482. I thank Larissa Bonfante for arranging permission for me to publish this image.

hinting at previous victims, and a small three-footed table reminds us of the impending sacrifice. Both Orestes and Pylades also wear fillets hanging on either side of their faces.[29] But we can understand Orestes' position between the letter(s) as a kind of safety zone: the power of the sealed tablet(s) will save him from death at the hands of his sister.

I would propose reading this scene as a kind of comic strip or loop: as our eyes move from left to right, we observe Iphigenia's letter moving across space, leaving her hands and arriving in Pylades' grasp; then our eyes reverse as we imagine Pylades delivering the tablet to Orestes, sitting between them. The loop is closed if we finish with a scene of Orestes and Iphigenia embracing. The doubled presence of a letter on the carved alabaster alerts the viewer that a special kind of viewing is called for; we are not meant to grasp the scene in its totality, but rather to follow the lead of the letter as it creates a narrative in time and space.[30]

The other Etruscan alabaster urn, now in Siena (Figure 6),[31] hews more closely to the standard single-letter representation, with one major difference: Iphigenia has lost her elegant clothes and joins the men in their nudity—although she keeps a cloak slung over her back and some sort of jewelry or sash around her neck and breasts, as well as a ring on the hand that clasps the letter tablet. Orestes sits facing his sister, again on a structure we can identify as an altar, while Pylades is about to be bound and led away.[32] Here the artist creates a physical closeness for brother and sister that may suggest a corresponding emotional closeness. Orestes and Pylades sit back to back, and Pylades' role as intermediary is reduced as this time Iphigenia's and Orestes' hands meet over the letter. She cradles her head on her forearm and he in his hand, hinting at despair on both their parts, but their heads almost touch in an arch over the letter, revealing intimacy and hope.

In the case of all these material representations of Iphigenia and her letter, in the absence of names written above the characters, only the letter

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29 Bonfante 2006: 129 observes that many of the details in this scene are specifically Etruscan: "the iconography of the urn can thus be seen as a translation into Etruscan artistic language of a theme from the Greek tragedy".

30 It is worth noting that Steuernagel suggested reading the broken-off female figure on the far right as Iphigenia in continuous narrative, which would work well with the idea put forth above of a continuous loop. See Steuernagel 1988: 39–40.

31 Siena, Mus. Arch. 730; Iph. Etr. 19 *LIMC* pp. 731–732, plate on p. 482.

32 The story seems to remain popular in the Roman period: a marble sarcophagus, dated to ca. AD 150–160, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (MMA 28.57.8a–d), shows Iphigenia's letter tablet in three dimensions. Iph. 57 *LIMC* p. 722, plate p. 475 identifies the profile of Orestes and the leg of Pylades, unsurprisingly depicted heroically nude: "le profil d' Orèste et une jambe de Pylade". See also McCann 1978 no. 7, fig. 57.

Figure 6: Etruscan alabaster cinerary urn from Sarteano. Ca. 200 BC. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 730, Siena. Image source: Scala/Art Resource, NY.

allows us to identify the figures. The men are travelers, the woman is a priestess, but only the object in Iphigenia's hand, the sealed letter tablet, lets us securely pinpoint the scene and interpret the narrative. The letter is the clue. For many modern readers, the phrase "Girl With a Pearl Earring", or more aptly "Girl with a Letter", produces an instant mental image of one of Vermeer's paintings. I imagine the same kind of association worked for ancient viewers: a girl with a letter?–it must be Iphigenia. We would not be able to read this particular narrative without the appearance of the letter; but the letter remains an object, a sealed envelope.

Most of the artistic representations discussed thus far seem to focus on the moment when Iphigenia has just recited for Pylades the contents of her letter, which she has memorized, so that even if the container is lost—by shipwreck or other disaster—the contents will be preserved through the messenger's voice and body.[33] The message is imagined doubly divorced from the medium: through reading, writing can still speak while the wax remains silent; or the letter can be destroyed but the words will still be rescued by oral performance.[34] But all the anxiety surrounding the mode

[33] On this play, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 72–80.
[34] See Jenkins 2006: 95–101.

of delivery and the security of the message are voided by the presence of both sender and addressee on both vase(s) and stage. In the end, Orestes does not even open the letter, since the message it contains has already been transmitted to him orally. In the Euripidean text, this becomes explicit when Orestes says (*IT* 793–794),[35]

> δέχομαι· παρεὶς δὲ γραμμάτων διαπτυχὰς
> τὴν ἡδονὴν πρῶτ᾽οὐ λόγοις αἱρήσομαι.
>
> I accept. I will not bother to open the letter,
> but will choose first a pleasure not of words [but of action].

Wright argues that "the uselessness of the letter is seen more strikingly in the fact that Orestes throws it away!"[36] It is true that Orestes apparently postpones reading the letter, and, seeking instead "a pleasure not of words", tries to embrace his sister. But the letter as object is far from useless; it is only discarded once it has fulfilled its specific use. Euripides asks the audience to accept that the letter has already been 'read', and that its function now is to bring about the recognition of the siblings and the eventual rescue of Iphigenia from her exile among the Taurians. The letter, actually unread by either sender (Iphigenia is illiterate) or addressee, and still sealed in Orestes' hands, functions as a token, a material object that guides the action.

Here I part company with Aristotle, who discusses discoveries brought about directly by the incidents themselves, in cases when the surprise is produced by means of what is likely. He quotes this very passage, saying that it is likely enough that Iphigenia should want to send a letter in her circumstances (*Poetics* 1455a):[37]

> πασῶν δὲ βελτίστη ἀναγνώρισις ἡ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, τῆς ἐκπλήξεως γιγνομένης δι᾽ εἰκότων, οἷον ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίποδι καὶ τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ· εἰκὸς γὰρ βούλεσθαι ἐπιθεῖναι γράμματα. αἱ γὰρ τοιαῦται μόναι ἄνευ τῶν πεποιημένων σημείων καὶ περιδεραίων.
>
> Best of all is the discovery that is brought about directly by the incidents, when the surprise is produced by means of what is likely, as is the case with Sophocles' *Oedipus* or in the *Iphigenia*: it is likely enough that she should want to send a letter. These are the only discovery scenes that dispense with artificial tokens, like necklaces.

Aristotle concludes that the discovery scenes in Euripides' *IT* and Sophocles' *OT* are the only recognition scenes in Athenian tragedy that do not use

35 Text is from Kovacs 1999: 232–233; translation is my own.
36 Wright 2005: 336.
37 Text from Kassel 1965: 26–27; translation my own.

artificial tokens, "like necklaces". But to my mind, in Euripides' *IT*, the unread letter is indeed a token along the lines of a necklace or lock of hair; and the letter is precisely an *un*likely choice for an illiterate girl—after all, she had to ask someone else to write it, and when she 'read' it aloud, she was actually reciting it from memory.[38] It remains very much a thing, a container, an unopened envelope, and once it—along with its fellow tokens—has brought about the *anagnorisis*, it is passed over in favor of a return to action. So the fact that Orestes does not open it highlights not the uselessness of textuality in the face of orality, as Wright would have it, but rather that it has played out its role as material object, as container rather than text, and advanced the plot. Most important here is the letter's connotation, in Todorov's terms, and in particular the ideas of previous familiarity and proof of authenticity.

III. *Iphigenia in Aulis*: The Letter Is Opened

While Euripides tantalizes his audience with a sealed tablet in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in the *Hippolytus* and the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, he allows letters to be opened and read aloud, both with disastrous consequences. But I want to emphasise how, in both instances, the first appearance of the letter, even before anyone has broken its seal, is a sign of something: the appearance of the letter is noted. I interpret the letter-object in the *IA* and the *Hippolytus* as having, in Roman Jakobson's terminology, a phatic function: pay attention, something odd is going on here![39] The letter has a dramatic function tantamount to a speaking part even before it is opened and its contents divulged. But the person who first notices the presence of the letter-object is sometimes at a complete loss as to its significance, in the case of Agamemenon's messenger in the *IA*, or misconstrues its meaning, in the case of Theseus in the *Hippolytus*.

The *Iphigenia in Aulis* opens with a letter center-stage, revealing Agamemnon writing a letter to warn his wife and daughter not to come to Aulis.[40] We soon discover that he had previously written another letter, one which in all likelihood has already been delivered, inviting Iphigenia to travel to Aulis, supposedly to marry Achilles, but in reality to be sacrificed to appease Artemis. Before Agamemnon begins his explanation, however, we

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[38] On this issue, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 72–80.
[39] Jakobson 1960: 350–377.
[40] See Jenkins 2006: 87 n. 13 for doubts about the authenticity of the prologue.

the audience are as confused as the old man who watches the king in his distress (*IA* 34–42):[41]

> … σὺ δὲ λαμπτῆρος
> φάος ἀμπετάσας δέλτον τε γράφεις
> τήνδ' ἣν πρὸ χερῶν ἔτι βαστάζεις,
> καὶ ταὐτὰ πάλιν γράμματα συγχεῖς
> καὶ σφραγίζεις λύεις τ' ὀπίσω
> ῥίπτεις τε πέδῳ πεύκην, θαλερὸν
> κατὰ δάκρυ χέων, κἀκ τῶν ἀπόρων
> οὐδενὸς ἐνδεῖς μὴ οὐ μαίνεσθαι.

> But you are writing a letter by the light of the lamp,
> The very letter you hold in your hand.
> And those same words you have written you erase again,
> You seal the tablet and then open it again,
> And you throw the wooden tablet on the ground,
> Weeping floods of tears; in your confusion
> You seem close to madness …

In this scene, Agamemnon seals and reopens the letter, holds it and throws it down, tries to rewrite his message to cancel out the earlier note. There are so many levels on which the letter's message fails: Agamemnon, by unsealing and sealing again, turns himself into both sender and interceptor, delaying the message's arrival at its proper destination, Argos; once the letter leaves his hands, it never reaches Clytemnestra, but is intercepted by Menelaus as he tries to make Agamemnon keep his promise to the Greek fleet.[42]

Yet there might have been an opportunity for the messenger to get the message through in spite of Menelaus' intervention, because Agamemnon, like Iphigenia, had recited the contents of his letter aloud to the old man (*IA* 111–113):

> ἀλλ' εἶα χώρει τάσδ' ἐπιστολὰς λαβὼν
> πρὸς Ἄργος. ἃ δὲ κέκευθε δέλτος ἐν πτυχαῖς,
> λόγῳ φράσω σοι πάντα τἀγγεγραμμένα·

> But come now, take this letter and carry it to Argos.
> What this tablet contains in its folds,
> I shall say to you out loud, everything that is written in it.

Unlike Pylades, who can imagine, in the event of a shipwreck, delivering his message without the original script, the old man is very worried about

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41 Text from Kovacs 2002: 170–171; translation my own. Further selections from *Iphigenia in Aulis* are taken from the same volume.

42 See Jenkins 2006: 88–90. On intercepted letters as narrative motif, see further the Introduction to this volume, p. 19, and Gordon (pp. 138–149), Bär (p. 227), and Repath (p. 238, 260 note 85).

getting the message right word-for-word (*IA* 115–116) and keeping the letter-object with him as proof of authenticity, which, we may recall, is the third epistolary connotation in Todorov's list. He asks (*IA* 153–158), "if I say these things, how will your wife and daughter trust me?" Agamemnon replies: "guard the seal on the letter you are carrying". We can interpret this line as "keep the letter sealed and unopened"–then Clytemnestra will know that the text has not been tampered with.[43] The intact seal on the unopened letter guarantees a genuine correspondence.

When Menelaus intercepts the letter, presumably assuming from the tense situation in the Greek camp that a second letter from Agamemnon to Clytemnestra can bode nothing good, the messenger blames him not for reading its contents, but rather for breaking the seal and opening the tablet (*IA* 307); Agamemnon similarly accuses Menelaus specifically of having broken the seal (*IA* 325). While the natural consequence is that Menelaus then reads the message, it is striking how Euripides focuses primarily on the physical assault on the letter-object. As Tom Jenkins points out in his book *Intercepted Letters* (2006):

> The violence inherent in reading a letter—the tearing of the envelope, the breaking of the seal—is made manifest by this disturbing act of violation, perpetrated by the powerful on the helpless (the vulnerable servant and the vulnerable text).[44]

The physical vulnerability of the container is further emphasised as Agamemnon and Menelaus fight over the letter-tablet (*delton*) itself, even after Menelaus clearly knows its contents (*grammata / ta engegrammena*) (*IA* 322–324):

> M: τήνδ' ὁρᾷς δέλτον, κακίστων γραμμάτων ὑπηρέτιν;
> A: εἰσορῶ· καὶ πρῶτα ταύτην σῶν ἀπάλλαξον χερῶν.
> M: οὔ, πρὶν ἂν δείξω γε Δαναοῖς πᾶσι τἀγγεγραμμένα.
>
> M: Do you see this tablet (*delton*), bearer of a shameful message (*grammata*)?
> A: I see it. And first now you must release it from your hands.
> M: No, not before I show its contents (*ta engegrammena*) to all the Greeks.

Agamemnon asks for the tablet; Menelaus responds that he will not let it go until he has broadcast its message, implying that his words will be

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[43] This is an ironic statement in the light of Menelaus' earlier sealing and unsealing and rewriting.

[44] Jenkins 2006: 95; see also Felman 1982: 94–207, esp. 164 on the relationship between epistolary reading and violence.

believed only if he can hold up the container as material proof. In the end, Menelaus exits the stage, making room for the herald to announce the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, and we can only assume that he leaves the tablet somewhere offstage, since it has played out its role.

While the actions, both explicitly narrated and more generally implied, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* go a long way toward helping us understand the importance of the letter-object in performance, we are fortunate also to have a material representation of the whole epistolary sequence. Again, all the *caveats* I expressed at the beginning of this discussion about the relationship between plays and pots still hold; but the images I introduce as evidence here focus so clearly on the letter as a physical object that they are well worth including. There is a little-studied bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (31.11.2), of unglazed terracotta with raised decorations, dating from the second century BC, that includes five vignettes of the sending and interception of Agamemnon's second letter to Clytemnestra (Figure 7).[45] The figures are labeled by name, including the old man acting as a messenger, the "letter-bearer for Clytemnestra". The act of transmission is shown through the presence of writer (Agamemnon), messenger, supposed recipient (Clytemnestra, noted by name only, not image) and interceptor (Menelaus) over the space of five sequential panels.[46]

The action moves around to bowl clockwise (or right to left). In the first scene of the panel, Agamemnon hands over the letter to his courier, who kneels and raises his open right hand to receive it. In the second scene, Menelaus lunges toward the courier's body, trying to grab the still sealed letter that is held tightly in the courier's right hand. In the third scene, the letter has been unsealed and presumably read: Menelaus, on the left, approaches Agamemnon, the opened letter in his right hand, the other hand raised, possibly in anger at the turn of events. In scene four, a messenger informs Agamemnon that Iphigenia approaches, and the final vignette brings all Agamemnon's children to Aulis in a chariot: Iphigenia, Elektra, and even baby Orestes. The letter itself stars in three of the five scenes: twice as a sealed object, and once broken open and exposed. The arrival of Iphigenia, its secondary recipient after Clytemnestra, eliminates further need for the letter's appearance on the bowl.

45 *LIMC* 6a–e, p. 711, plates on pp. 466–467. See Sinn 1979: 109–110 with plates 1.2; 22.1–2; 23.1–3; see also Jenkins 2006: 87–101; Richter 1953: 131, figure 111a–c.

46 This type of narration of multiple scenes, in which key figures reappear, is usually called "cyclical" when the scenes are divided by frames, or "continuous" when there is no division by frames. See Stansbury-O'Donnell 2011: 68. See below, note 65.

Figure 7: Megarian bowl, unglazed terracotta, with raised decorations. 2nd century BC. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 31.11.2, New York. Image copyright @ The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

The representation of the letter(s) on the Metropolitan Museum bowl resembles that of the New York University Etruscan alabaster urn discussed earlier. Multiple letters are depicted, but we know to read them as the same letter moving through time and space, a bit like Valmont's recycled missive to La Présidente. While the urn showed the letter changing hands but remaining sealed, the bowl displays the letter as it changes before our eyes: the sealed container becomes an opened container, its contents visible to all, enabling and revealing the plot's progress. But in terms of the plot, the letter actually did not need to be opened. We have already learned its contents from Agamemnon's conversation with the messenger; Menelaus has read the letter off-stage, so in his case, too, the return of the broken tablet on stage is not absolutely necessary for informational or communicative purposes. What Euripides and the ceramic artists achieve, then, by highlighting the letter on stage and on the artifacts, is a focus on the letter as physical phenomenon. As we view the messenger and Menelaus struggling over the letter on stage, or the movement on the bowl from scene two to scene three, we witness the danger of epistolary interception and the disaster of failed delivery. The physical struggle over the epistolary object in Aulis contrasts with the ease of delivery as depicted in artistic renditions informed by the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, but in both cases, the viewer reacts most strongly to the letter as object or talisman. Here the talisman can be interpreted as salvation (for Agamemnon, Iphigenia) or disaster (for Menelaus), depending on one's point of view.

IV. *Hippolytus*, *Palamedes*, and Aeneas Tacticus

In both Euripidean plays discussed thus far, the letter's appearance is hailed with a flurry of attention, but its exit is barely noted. I see this again as an argument for the phatic function of the letter-object; like its human counterpart, a messenger hurrying on stage, it lets us know that something momentous has happened or is about to happen.[47] An audience rarely notices when

[47] Of related interest, Oliver Taplin has pointed out to me *per litteras* a calyx-krater in Basel (Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig S34) by the Darius Painter (ca. 330 BC), which shows Rhodope standing with a writing tablet in her hands in front of Antiope with her young son Hippolytus. Taplin comments: "Although we cannot be confident that this draws on a tragedy, it is partly the writing-tablet held out in Rhodope's hand that encourages the speculation. This is an unusual prop in mythological narratives, and one of its most famous occurrences was the suicide-letter of Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. So it is just possible

the messenger, or the letter, exits.[48] In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the identification of letter with messenger is sustained. At first glance, Theseus thinks the letter hanging from his dead wife's hand is a kind of messenger that wants to tell him something: the letter connoting news, in Todorov's terms (*Hipp.* 856–859):[49]

> ἔα ἔα·
> τί δή ποθ' ἥδε δέλτος ἐκ φίλης χερὸς
> ἠρτημένη; θέλει τι σημῆναι νέον;
> ἀλλ' ἦ λέχους μοι καὶ τέκνων ἐπιστολὰς
> ἔγραψεν ἡ δύστηνος, ἐξαιτουμένη;
>
> Alas, alas.
> What indeed is this tablet hanging from her own dear hand?
> Does it wish to tell me some news?
> Has the wretched woman written me a message, making a request
> About our marriage and children?

Theseus' first guess, before opening the letter, is that it is a request for him to remain faithful, not to remarry and expose their children to the evils of a stepmother. He misreads the letter even before opening it; the letter is really concerned not with his fidelity, but with Phaedra's.[50] Again, as with Menelaus' suspicions of Agamemnon's letter, Euripides plays with the idea of the letter as an object that evokes a response in a character who has not yet had the benefit of reading its contents. In the *Hippolytus*, when Theseus does open the seal, his shock and horror push him to deny his own involvement as reader; the letter itself takes on human attributes as it screams aloud at him, intoning a lurid song of horror. Instead of being a medium for the sender, Phaedra, the letter has its own voice, one that Theseus feels he cannot challenge because of the unbroken seal of his wife's signet ring and the circumstance of her death.

Many scholars have noted the strong language used to describe the letter's voice—as if a written document were endowed with the power to speak, and

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that this recherché tragedy was concerned with the childhood of Hippolytus, and hinged on a key letter, a kind of 'prequel' to the one in Euripides' tragedy". See discussion in Taplin 2007: 245–246.

48 This habit is not restricted to ancient tragedy. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, Act 4 Scene 6, two letters from Hamlet are delivered by Horatio: Hamlet's letter to King Claudius is read aloud and carefully inspected ("Know you the hand?" asks Laertes of Claudius), while the accompanying letter to the Queen is neither delivered onstage nor ever referred to again.

49 Text from Kovacs 1995: 206–207; translation my own.

50 See Jenkins 2006: 81–84.

had animated itself upon opening.[51] The shrieks of the letter overpower Theseus' initial assessment of the sealed document. There is a fascinating parallel in Euripides' (mostly) lost play *Palamedes*, when the eponymous hero boasts of his accomplishments as an inventor (*Palamedes* fr. 578 Nauck):[52]

> τὰ τῆς γε λήθης φάρμακ' ὀρθώσας μόνος,
> ἄφωνα φωνήεντα συλλαβὰς τιθεὶς
> ἐξηῦρον ἀνθρώποισι γράμματ' εἰδέναι,
> ὥστ' οὐ παρόντα ποντίας ὑπὲρ πλακὸς
> τἀκεῖ κατ' οἴκους πάντ' ἐπίστασθαι καλῶς,
> παισίν τ' ἀποθνῄσκοντα χρημάτων μέτρον
> γράψαντας εἰπεῖν, τὸν λαβόντα δ' εἰδέναι.
> ἃ δ' εἰς ἔριν πίπτουσιν ἀνθρώποις κακὰ
> δέλτος διαιρεῖ, κοὐκ ἐᾷ ψευδῆ λέγειν.

> I alone organized the cures for forgetfulness,
> creating syllables out of consonants and vowels.
> I discovered for mankind knowledge of writing (*grammata*),
> so that someone across the expanse of the sea can understand clearly
> even at a distance everything that happens at home,
> and so that a dying man can read out the division of his property
> to his sons, and the one receiving it will know.
> The tablet (*deltos*) will pass judgment on those difficult matters in which men have fallen into strife, and *a tablet does not allow a man to lie.*
> (my italics)

Palamedes insists that letters don't lie; Theseus says practically the same thing when Hippolytus begs him to listen to his words rather than believe Phaedra's letter. When father and son confront one another, Theseus apparently is still grasping the lying letter, thrusting it at his son as he speaks, if we are understanding all the deictics properly (*Hipp.* 959–961); he presents the letter as surer proof of Hippolytus' guilt than any oral prophecies or auguries (*Hipp.* 1057–1059). Thus both Hippolytus and Palamedes are condemned to death by a forged letter; and in Palamedes' case, there is added irony in that

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51 For a brief discussion and bibliography, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 88–92; Jenkins 2006: 81–84. Bowie, in his chapter in this volume (p. 82), discusses how the letters on Eteocles' shield also "cry out" in Aeschylus' *Septem*. However, as pointed out to me by an anonymous reader, one could argue that most audience members would have been familiar with the convention of speaking objects (*oggetti parlanti*), such as tombstones that speak in their own voice, and might not have found these passages particularly odd. For the idea of the tablet as symbolic of the female body, see duBois 1988: 130–166, the chapter titled "Tablet".

52 Text of *Palamedes* 578 from Nauck 1889; translation my own. For further discussion of Palamedes and writing, see Jenkins 2006: 15–36, and in this volume Bowie (p. 71), Gera (p. 92), and Bär (pp. 230–232).

he is conquered by his own invention. Palamedes asserts that *writing* cannot lie, but as Tom Jenkins has pointed out in this context, *writers* can:

> The meaning of writing depends on who is playing: the text takes its cue from where it came from and where it is going to, and the interpretation of the reader must take into account the *transmission* of the signs as well as the signs themselves, the system of spatial as well as phonetic transfer.[53]

In the *Hippolytus*, only after another death offstage—that of Hippolytus himself—does Artemis appear and point out to Theseus how badly he underestimated the duplicitous letter that so easily persuaded him. Not only did Theseus misread the message, but he also did not take into account the manner of its transmission. A sealed letter on a corpse should have alerted him to possible danger; instead Theseus accepted its contents at face value.[54]

In Hyginus' summary of Palamedes' supposed treason, a letter also appears on a corpse, and is similarly accepted at face value (Hyginus 105):[55]

> Vlixes … clam noctu solus magnum pondus auri ubi tabernaculum Palamedis fuerat obruit, item epistulam conscriptam Phrygi captiuo ad Priamum dat perferendam, militemque suum priorem mittit qui eum non longe a castris interficeret. postero die cum exercitus in castra rediret, quidam miles epistulam quam Vlixes scripserat super cadauer Phrygis positam ad Agamemnonem attulit, in qua scriptum fuit "Palamedi a Priamo missa," tantumque ei auri pollicetur quantum Vlixes in tabernaculum obruerat, si castra Agamemnonis ut ei conuenerat proderet.

> Odysseus […] secretly at night, by himself piled up a great mound of gold where Palamedes' tent used to stand. Also, he gave a written letter to a Trojan prisoner to take to Priam. However, he had sent out one of his soldiers to kill the prisoner first, not far from the camp. The next day, as the army was returning to camp, a soldier found the Trojan prisoner's corpse, and on top of it the letter that Odysseus had written. He took it to Agamemnon, and the letter said, "To Palamedes from Priam", and it promised Palamedes some gold if he should betray the Greek camp. It was exactly the same amount of gold that Odysseus had hidden under Palamedes' tent.

Hyginus' description is almost novelistic in its details, and indeed there are also suspicious letters on corpses in the Greek novels.[56] But somehow the characters involved never really 'get' that a letter on a corpse should be read

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53 Jenkins 2005: 29–53, quotation from p. 44.

54 See Jenkins 2006: 84.

55 Text of Hyginus 105 from Jenkins 2006: 22–23; translation my own. See also Jenkins 2005: 43–44.

56 There is a letter on a corpse towards the beginning of Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*; on letters in the novels in general, see Rosenmeyer 2001: 133–168.

differently, more cautiously, than a letter that arrives by regular delivery services. Even before opening such a letter, one should be on guard. Todorov would say that Theseus—and Agamemnon in the case of Palamedes—can be seen as suffering from a partial understanding of the epistolary situation: they accept the "sentences that constitute" the letter, but misunderstand the connotations of the letter as social phenomenon, i.e. that in the hands of an unscrupulous person, or when found on the body of a person who has died under suspicious circumstances, the letter is highly likely deceitful, and can easily turn into a potent weapon of destruction.

There are many wonderful instances from antiquity where the system of spatial transfer—the circumstance of the transmission—reveals something about the letter before it is opened. Obviously, if the sender takes extreme care to disguise his or her letter, the recipient should realise immediately that the letter is both time sensitive and meant for "your eyes only": for example, a letter sewn into a dog collar (Aen. Tact. 31.32), or "written on lead and rolled up tightly and worn in woman's ears instead of earrings" (Aen. Tact. 31.6–7), two tricks suggested by the fourth-century BC author of military strategy, Aeneas the Tactician. Other letter formats may be secret but not as time sensitive, such as the technique described by Herodotus of tattooing a message on the head of a slave; one must wait for the hair to grow back before sending the slave on his secret journey.[57] An even more effective system is to send a message without the messenger knowing that he is transmitting it, thus bypassing the dangers of interception or involuntary revelation of the contents during torture. Here is another of Aeneas the Tactician's ideas (31.4–5):[58]

> πεμπέσθω ἀνὴρ ἀγγελίαν φέρων τινὰ ἢ καὶ ἐπιστολὴν περὶ ἄλλων φανερῶν· τοῦ δὲ μέλλοντος πορεῦσθαι κρυφαίως αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ τῶν ὑποδημάτων πέλμα ἐντεθήτω εἰς τὸ μεταξὺ βυβλίον καὶ καταρραπτέσθω, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς πηλοὺς καὶ τὰ ὕδατα εἰς κασσίτερον ἐληλασμένον λεπτὸν γραφέσθω πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀφανίζεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ὑδάτων τὰ γράμματα. ἀφικομένου δὲ παρ' ὃν δεῖ, καὶ ἀναπαυομένου ἐν τῇ νυκτί, ἀναλυέτω τὰς ῥαφὰς τῶν ὑποδημάτων, καὶ ἐξελὼν καὶ ἀναγνούς, ἄλλα γράψας λάθρᾳ ἔτι καθεύδοντος καὶ ἐγκαταρράψας ἀποστελλέτω τὸν ἄνδρα, ἀνταγγείλας ἢ καὶ δούς τι φέρειν φανερῶς. οὕτως οὖν οὔτε ἄλλος οὔτε ὁ φέρων εἰδήσει· χρὴ δὲ τὰς ῥαφας τῶν ὑποδημάτων ὡς ἀδηλοτάτας ποιεῖν.

> Let us say a man is sent with news to tell or a message to deliver concerning other things that aren't private. He can, without his knowledge, have a letter

[57] See Herodotus 5.35, and discussion in Rosenmeyer 2001: 48.
[58] Text from The Illinois Greek Club 1948: 156–157; translation my own. See also Whitehead 1990 and Jenkins 2006: 51–67.

> placed in the sole of his sandal and sewn inside there just as he is about to set off on his errand. For protection against mud and water, the letter should be written on a thin sheet of metal, so that the water does not damage the letters. Once the man has reached his destination and is resting for the night, the stitching on the sole of his sandal can be undone, the letter removed and read, and a reply written and secretly sewn back in while he is still asleep; and then he can be sent back quite openly with a return message or even something to carry back with him. In this way neither the messenger himself nor anyone else will be aware of anything,–but it is necessary that the stitching of his sandal be as inconspicuous as possible.[59]

From the same epistolary mastermind we also get the option of a messenger with letters written on leaves that are then bound as a dressing for a fake wound (Aen. Tact. 31.6–7), and letters that look like a ball of thread, but are in reality astragals elaborately threaded according to complex codes of numbered holes representing sequences of alphabetic letters (Aen. Tact. 31.17).[60]

But while some of these wilder methods of transmission focus on secrecy and bypassing potential interceptors, the examples we have explored thus far emphasise their materiality by being just what they appear to be: letters. And it is that moment of arrival, when the letter has not been opened yet, that is of greatest interest to me. At the risk of trivialising this study, let me clarify with some modern examples, in which the method of transmission and delivery connotes the importance of the message before any reading occurs. In the "Harry Potter" series, Ron and his fellow students at Hogwarts know exactly what to expect when he receives a particular kind of letter from his mother: the much-dreaded "Howler". Ron does not need to open the seal and hear the words spoken aloud to get the message of maternal disapproval. Similarly, the thin or thick college acceptance letter says it all when it arrives sealed in the mailbox. Postcards are perhaps the best example of a letter that is not one: that is, the postcard is all about appearance rather than message. The connotations of the postcard—that the absent writer is thinking of you, wishing you were 'here'–are immediately understood when the physical object arrives in its recipient's hands, affecting the recipient before he or she even reads the card's contents. The postcard represents a particular mood and level of informality; nobody sends a death

59 See also Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.623–624; 493–498; 619–630.

60 To this list we can add the odd custom of petalism, the short-lived Syracusan counterpart of Athenian ostracism, where the names were inscribed not on potsherds but on olive leaves; see Diodorus Siculus 11.87.

announcement by postcard, because death demands the formality of a fine quality envelope with black borders and embossing. Even the lowly stamp plays the epistolary connotation game: in the U.S., 'love' stamps are highly prized by brides-to-be, and send a romantic message on Valentine's Day.

V. Lucian and Homer

In the case of the postcard, connotation and content usually support one another: the picture of lakes or mountains on the front of the card is a nice addition to the literal contents–"having a good time! wish you were here!" But as we saw at the beginning of this study, Todorov argues that epistolary connotations can also be "in addition, or even in opposition, to the literal meaning of each letter". Let us return to this theme, already touched on in the case of Pliny and Laclos. The oppositional relationship between literal and connotative aspects of a letter can be well illustrated by two examples from antiquity: Lucian's narrator in *A True Story*, and Bellerophon's "baleful signs" in *Iliad* 6. The narratives in Homer and Lucian, as far apart as they are chronologically, both point to connotations that contrast with contents: Lucian's narrator assumes the worst and is rewarded with a good outcome; Homer's hero assumes the best and barely escapes with his life. We could call these 'disobedient letters', along the lines of Andrew Laird's definition of "disobedient ecphrases".[61] The 'disobedient letter' suggests one thing and offers another; it obstructs any easy attempt to predict what the words inside might be, and emphasises the gap between external appearance and internal meaning.

Lucian's narrator is immediately suspicious of the letter he is given. But then this is no ordinary letter, but rather a letter from wily Odysseus addressed to his abandoned beloved Calypso. Our narrator invites us into his circle of educated readers who are called upon to reconcile Odysseus' reputation in Homer as both devoted to his wife Penelope and as the ultimate strategist: he is the inventor of that quintessential deceptive 'container', the Trojan horse, as well as the epistolary murderer of Palamedes.[62] Small wonder, then, that Lucian's narrator thinks he smells a rat when Odysseus, explicitly without Penelope's knowledge, asks him to carry a letter from the

[61] Laird 1993: 18–30, esp. 19. My discussion assumes that letters are objects of communication, meant to be opened and read, and that the sealed state of a letter is a sign of its movement in the process of sending and delivery.

[62] See Jenkins 2006: 15–36; Rosenmeyer 2002: 43.

Islands of the Blessed to Calypso. The humour, however, surfaces when our and the narrator's suspicions are revealed as wholly unfounded (*VH* 2.35):[63]

> Τριταῖοι δ' ἐκεῖθεν τῇ Ὠγυγίᾳ νήσῳ προσσχόντες ἀπεβαίνομεν. πρότερον δ' ἐγὼ λύσας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀνεγίνωσκον τὰ γεγραμμένα. ἦν δὲ τοιάδε· Ὀδυσσεὺς Καλυψοῖ χαίρειν. ἴσθι με, ὡς τὰ πρῶτα ἐψέπλευσα παρὰ σοῦ τὴν σχεδίαν κατασκευασάμενος, ναυαγίᾳ χρησάμενον μόλις ὑπὸ Λευκοθέας διασωθῆναι εἰς τὴν τῶν Φαιάκων χώραν, ὑφ' ὧν ἐς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀποπεμφθεὶς κατέλαβον πολλοὺς τῆς γυναικὸς μνηστῆρας ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις τρυφῶντας ἀποκτείνας δὲ ἅπαντας ὑπὸ Τηλεγόνου ὕστερπον τοῦ ἐκ Κίρκης μοι γενομένου ἀνηρέθην, καὶ νῦν εἰμι ἐν τῇ Μακάρων νήσῳ πάνυ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ τῷ καταλιπεῖν τὴν παρὰ σοὶ δίαιταν καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ σοῦ προτεινομένην ἀθανασίαν. ἢν οὖν καιροῦ λάβωμαι, ἀποδρὰς ἀφίξομαι πρὸς σέ. ταῦτα μὲν ἐδήλου ἡ ἐπιστολή, καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ὅπως ξενισθῶμεν.
>
> After three days we approached Ogygia and landed, but first I opened Odysseus' letter and read what he had written, which was as follows.
>
>> Greetings from Odysseus to Calypso.
>> You should know that as soon as I sailed away from you in the raft I built, I was shipwrecked. With the help of Leucothea, I just barely managed to get onto dry land in Phaeacia. The Phaeacians sent me back home, and I caught a lot of men trying to woo my wife and living it up in my house. So I killed them all, but then later I was murdered by Telegonus, my son by Circe; now I am on the Island of the Blessed, and really regretting that I left my life with you and rejected the immortality you offered me. So if I get a chance, I'll slip away and come to you.
>
> These are the things the letter said, and also, concerning us, that we were to be entertained.

For our narrator, the connotations of Odysseus' letter before he reads it are all negative. He fully expects Odysseus' letter to be deceitful and dangerous, like Phaedra's or Proetus'. He breathes a deep sigh of relief when the letter turns out to be just what it was supposed to be: a love letter to Calypso and a letter of introduction for our narrator and his crew. Here the sealed letter's connotations are misread as negative, but the content—what the letter actually says when our narrator intercepts it—corrects that first impression by its honesty and transparency.

If misreading the connotations of a sealed letter in Lucian leads to comic relief—we are pleased to inform you that you will not be killed after all—Bellerophon's misreading of his letter in Homer almost leads to tragedy. Here I don't mean misreading literally, since it is unclear whether the baleful

[63] Text from Harmon 1913; translation my own. On this text, see also the chapter in this volume by Bär.

signs,—the *semata lugra*–are actual alphabetic letters or just some sort of symbols guaranteeing safe conduct. Also, Bellerophon himself never 'reads' anything, since the tablet is not addressed to him, and, unlike Lucian's narrator, he does not seem curious about the letter's content. Bellerophon, blissfully unaware of Proetus' wife's malevolence, is sent off with *semata lugra* to the king of Lycia, who entertains his guest royally for nine days before asking to see the *semata*. It turns out to be a *sema kakon* (*Iliad* 6.177), a demand that the bearer of the note be put to death immediately. Homer gives no indication whether Bellerophon ever finds out the actual contents of the message; but once the king realises that the contents differ radically from what both of them assumed—emphatically *not* a letter of recommendation and safe passage—he must change his approach to his guest. The *sema kakon* slips from sight as Bellerophon's dining privileges are revoked and he is sent off instead on a series of dangerous quests. The king does not actually obey the demands of the letter directly; but then, even a "Howler" probably could not have convinced him to stain his own hands with murder.

VI. Conclusions

I have been arguing throughout this study for an appreciation for the appearance of the letter: by that I obviously mean both its presence—the way it suddenly appears as a device or token, and then soundlessly disappears,— and what it looks like—its physical shape and placement in a textual narrative or on a material object. I have emphasised that the letter does not need to be opened or read to be fully functional as a narrative device; and that some of the most effective letters take advantage of the disjunction between external appearance and actual written words: Todorov labels this the opposition between connotation and content. Throughout all this, the materiality of the letter—along with its mobility—remains a critical element in its identity.

I end with one last modern example of the enduring importance of epistolary materiality—or perhaps it is just a nostalgia factor. There is now an option online called "Earth Class Mail", whose advertisement reads as follows: "With Earth Class Mail, customers can read their mail on the Internet".[64] Their website boasts that we will now be able to manage our mail

64 http://www.earthclassmail.com.

without ever handling paper or worrying about packages left unattended in the lobby. Earth Class Mail is not to be confused with electronic mail, which has no physical existence beyond the computer screen. This is 'snail mail', scanned onto the computer, accessed by computer, but showing the letter or postcard in all its physical glory, with envelope, stamp, messy handwriting and all. My favourite button on the Earth Class Mail site is "Not My Mail"–but will we be tempted to read it anyway?[65]

[65] In the proof stage of this chapter, and after ordering new photographs from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I realized that Richter (1953), Sinn (1979) and the LIMC entry (1990) describe the scenes on the Megarian bowl discussed above in a sequence that does not correspond to the reality of the physical object. I apologize for any confusion, and hope to offer a correction in a forthcoming article.

"BALEFUL SIGNS": LETTERS AND DECEIT IN HERODOTUS

Angus Bowie

The first reference to writing in Western literature is Proetus' missive to the king of Lycia designed to encompass the death of its bearer, Bellerophon (*Il.* 6.168–169):

> πόρεν δ' ὅ γε σήματα λυγρά,
> γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷι θυμοφθόρα πολλά
>
> he gave him baleful signs, writing them in a folded tablet, life-destroying, many.

Homer, perhaps to maintain the mythical flavour of the tale, is imprecise about what form the 'signs' took, but clearly written communication is involved, ideographic or alphabetical. This first instance of a written communication is, significantly for our study of Herodotus, associated with deception and (intended) death. The epithet θυμοφθόρος is elsewhere used of poisonous drugs (φάρμακα, *Od.* 2.329) and crippling distress (*Od.* 4.716, cf. 19.323). From the very start writing is presented as something sinister and disruptive, and this will be a predominant feature of the letter in Herodotus.

We find something similar in tragedy. Not all writing there is necessarily deceptive, but there are notable examples. Phaedra's letter is designed to bring about the death of Hippolytus (Eur. *Hipp.* 856), and Odysseus' that of Palamedes (Eur. *Palamedes*);[1] Oiax's stratagem of informing Palamedes' father of his death by writing on oar-blades encompasses the destruction of the Greek fleet (Eur. *Palamedes* fr. 588a). Agamemnon writes to his wife a deceitful letter about marrying Iphigeneia to Achilles, to get Iphigeneia to come to Aulis so that he can sacrifice her to Artemis (Eur. *IA* 98–103). In Thucydides too "it is remarkable how much the letters … are instruments of death, betrayal, and deceit".[2]

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[1] This letter is not mentioned in the few fragments of the play, but is found in schol. Eur. *Or.* 432 and Hyginus *Fab.* 105. There is a more positive assessment of letters in the remark of Palamedes: "a writing-tablet settles troubles that bring disputes among men, and does not permit falsehoods" (*Palamedes* fr. 578.8–9). For the negative associations of letters in epic and tragedy, see also Rosenmeyer 2001, 39–44, 61–97, and this volume; on Palamedes specifically, see Gera (p. 92), Rosenmeyer (pp. 60–66), and Bär (pp. 230–232).

[2] Harris 1989: 88.

When one surveys the use of letters in Herodotus, the material could at first sight seem rather unpromising. Counting the number of letters referred to is slightly problematic, given Herodotus' penchant for blurring the nature of the communication process, so that it is unclear whether a letter or an oral message is involved, and uncertainties about what one might count as a letter. Useful here therefore is the idea of 'epistolary colour', defined by Morello and Morrison as 'anything which suggests to us we are indeed reading letters in any given instance'.[3] There are references to at most fourteen specific letters,[4] but only in six cases is there verbatim quotation, often slight: Bagaeus reads two letters of no more than one line each; Nitetis' second inscription is of one line; Oroetes has some 70 words; Harpagus and Amasis some 130. This apparently paltry amount of material however does contain a good deal of interest for the study of letters, especially when it is combined with other passages involving communication. Since the formal aspects of letters and other forms of written and spoken communication are not kept distinct, the dividing line between letters and other forms of communication is not a sharp one in Herodotus.

I. Letters and Major Events

There may be few actual letters, but they are associated with some of the most important events in the history: Herodotus, to quote van den Hout, "does not mention the writing of a letter for the simple historic reason that at a certain moment some person of the story writes a letter, but on account of the interesting way in which it is written or delivered":[5] one would add 'and the significance of the historical moment involved'.

Letters are associated with the inception of three major historical events, the founding of the Achaemenid empire (letters by Harpagus and Cyrus), the start of the Ionian Revolt (Histiaeus) and the beginning of the invasion of Greece by Xerxes (Demaratus). That is, they mark what are essen-

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[3] Morello and Morrison (2007) vi.

[4] 1.123 Harpagus to Cyrus;* 1.125 Cyrus to Persians; 1.187 Nitetis inscription to kings who open her tomb without cause;* 3.40 Amasis to Polycrates;* 3.42 Polycrates to Amasis; 3.122 Oroetes to Polycrates (but see on this below);* 3.128 Bagaeus to Oroetes' men (two);* 5.14 Darius to Megabyzus; 5.35 Histiaeus to Aristagoras; 6.4 Histiaeus to Persians; 7.239 Demaratus to Spartans; 8.22 Themistocles to Ionians;* 8.128 Artabazus and Timoxenus (* = quoted verbatim).

[5] Van den Hout 1949: 28. He contrasts this with Thucydides who "presents his letters because they are important for the history itself, without paying attention to the historically unimportant way of delivering".

tially the main structural events of the work. Furthermore, the inception of the Achaemenid Empire, the great counterpart to Greece in the work, is appropriately marked by what one might call the most 'high-profile' letter in Herodotus, that from Harpagus to Cyrus, which is both quoted verbatim and also marked by a stratagem, the only letter of which this is true; a second letter from Cyrus follows, though this is not quoted.

Furthermore, the three other letters quoted verbatim mark the deaths of two prominent figures. Amasis' letter is a prelude to the death of Polycrates, "with whom, apart from the tyrants of Syracuse, none of the Greek tyrants is worthy to be compared in magnificence" (3.125.2). This is also marked, not by a stratagem, but by a striking and memorable tale of the almost supernatural discovery in the belly of a fish of the ring Polycrates threw away.[6]

Oroetes, a dangerously powerful satrap who governed Phrygia, Lycia and Ionia (3.127), fearing the growth of Polycrates' power and his ambition, sends him a deceptive message promising him money and the mastery of all Greece, if he will help him defend himself against Cambyses (3.122); he follows this up with a trick to give the impression that he has great wealth. Despite powerful warnings, Polycrates goes to him and is murdered.

Appropriately, Oroetes himself is also a victim of letters when Darius wishes to remove him from the scene. Knowing that this can be achieved only by σοφίηι ("cunning"), not by violence or force of numbers, Darius seeks volunteers and Bagaeus is chosen (3.128.3–5):[7]

> He wrote many letters on different subjects, affixed the king's seal to them and took them to Sardis. When he got there and came into Oroetes' presence, he took out each letter in turn and gave it to the royal scribe (γραμματιστῆι) to read (all of the governors have royal scribes).[8] Bagaeus handed over the letters to test the spearmen, to see whether they would consent to revolt against Oroetes. When he saw them greatly revering (σεβουμένους μεγάλως) the rolls and even more what was written in them, he handed over another, in which were these words: "O Persians! King Darius forbids you to be Oroetes' guard". On hearing this, they lowered their spears for him. When Bagaeus saw that they obeyed the letter in this, he was encouraged to give the last roll to the scribe, in which was written: "King Darius gives orders to the Persians in Sardis to kill Oroetes". When they heard this, the spearmen seizing their swords (*akinakes*) killed him at once.

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[6] The discovery of the ring in the belly perhaps repeats the motif of the discovery of a valuable object in an animal's belly from Harpagus' stratagem.

[7] All translations are my own. Herodotus is quoted from Hude 1927.

[8] The historical evidence suggests that in the Near East imperial and such letters were official documents, not written to be read quietly by the recipient, but carried by an official, and read out by him or by a bilingual scribe, probably with considerable pomp (cf. Bryce 2003: 63–64).

The letters, believed to be from the king, have immense power here, bearing in themselves the authority of Darius so that the men do not hesitate to carry out the letters' murderous purpose.[9] The power of letters to command and deceive is made strikingly clear.

II. Letters and Deception

What is noticeable in five of the six letters discussed so far, is that they all involve trickery and deceit.[10] In fact, of all the letters in Herodotus, only three do not involve trickery: Amasis's letter to Polycrates and Polycrates' reply (3.40–42), and Darius' letter to Megabyzus instructing him to attack Paeonia (5.14.1).[11] The three seminal episodes discussed above are linked by the cunning stratagems which accompany the sending of the letter; and in each case the need to circumvent Persian surveillance of the roads creates the need for the stratagem, with the language being very similar in each.[12]

The deceptive nature of the letters is also stressed in the language. Harpagus ἐπιτεχνᾶται τοιόνδε. λαγὸν μηχανησάμενος ... ("devised a scheme like this. Having cunningly arranged a hare ...", 1.123.3–4). He disguised his "most trusted" servant as a hunter and gave him the hare with the letter sewn in its belly, with orders to tell Cyrus to open the letter when he was alone. In a manner reminiscent of Bagaeus' trick with letters, Cyrus subsequently considered (ἐφρόντιζε) how to persuade the Persians to revolt ὅτεωι τρόπωι

9 Cf. Esther 8.8: "the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, no man may reverse".

10 Cf. the general point made by Harris 1989: 88: "Literary sources seem to suggest that [letters] were largely reserved for grave occasions or for sensitive secret communications, at least until the fourth century and perhaps even then". For tricks with letters, see Aen. Tact. 31, also discussed by Rosenmeyer in this volume (pp. 64–65). The dangers of letters being intercepted become a recurring theme in historiographical narratives concerned with epistolarity: see further in this volume Gera on Xenophon (pp. 85, 89–90) and Olson on Josephus (p. 359 note 34).

11 This is not to say that letters are the only means of deceptive communication, nor obviously that Herodotus is implying that the spoken word conveys truth in the way writing cannot. Cf. e.g. Themistocles' use of Sicinnus to take a deceptive, certainly spoken message to Xerxes at Salamis (8.75).

12 1.123.3 ἄλλως μὲν οὐδαμῶς εἶχε ἅτε τῶν ὁδῶν φυλασσομένων ("he had no alternative because the roads were guarded"), 5.35.3 ἄλλως μὲν οὐδαμῶς εἶχε ἀσφαλέως σημῆναι ὥστε φυλασσομένων τῶν ὁδῶν ("he had no alternative means of conveying his message safely because the roads were guarded"), 7.239.3 ἄλλως μὲν δὴ οὐκ εἶχε σημῆναι ... ἵνα φερόμενον κεινὸν τὸ δελτίον μηδὲν πρῆγμα παρέχοι πρὸς τῶν ὁδοφυλάκων ("he had no alternative means of conveying his message [...] so that the carrying of an empty tablet should not lead to any problem from the guards on the road"). On this surveillance, cf. Silverstein 2007: 13–15.

σοφωτάτωι ("in the cleverest manner he could"), and "came up with the idea" (φροντίζων δε εὕρισκε) that it would be most appropriate (καιριώτατα) to forge a letter from Astyages appointing himself commander of the Persian armies (1.125.1). This he read at an assembly of the Persians, and assumed command of them. To foment the Ionian revolt, Histiaeus like Harpagus used his "most trusted" servant: he shaved his head and tattooed the writing on it, and then waited until the hair had grown again before sending the messenger with instructions to Aristagoras to shave his head. Finally, Demaratus' warning to the Spartans of Xerxes' expedition was, as one version had it, done out of goodwill,[13] but it represented a form of treachery as he was then part of Xerxes' entourage. The trickery is again emphasised: Demaratus μηχανᾶται ("devises a scheme") and Herodotus says the Spartans learnt of the expedition τρόπωι θωμασίωι ("in an amazing manner"), in that Demaratus reversed the normal order of a writing a letter by writing on the wood and then covering it with the wax. The stratagem is a little too clever, because the Spartans cannot work out what the empty tablet means, until Cleomenes daughter, Gorgo, ἐπιφρασθεῖσα αὐτή ("using her native intelligence") suggested they scrape off the wax.[14]

There are two further notable examples of the deceptive use of letters. First, Themistocles inscribed 'letters' (γράμματα)[15] to the Ionians on the stones at all the watering-holes which Xerxes' army would pass, in an attempt to persuade them either to abandon the Persians, sit out the battle or fight feebly against the Greeks with whom they shared descent (8.22). In this way he thought either the letters would go unnoticed by the Persians and persuade the Ionians to change sides, or if discovered would render the Ionians suspect and so Xerxes would not be keen to use them in battle. Later in the story, during the siege of Potidaea after the battle at Salamis, Timoxenus, the *strategos* of the Scionians, traded messages with the Persian commander Artabazus through letters hidden by the feathers on arrows and shot into an agreed place (8.128).

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13 Cf. 7.239.2.

14 There seems no especially striking appropriateness in the modes of communication used in connection with these events. Rosenmeyer 2001: 47 suggests that "we can almost imagine a mock ritual of 'haruspicium' as Cyrus 'reads' the entrails of the animal", but nothing else supports this. Steiner 1994: 151 says that Demaratus' stratagem is especially appropriate because "the Spartans, with their notorious mistrust of writing […] are ideally suited to discover the meaning of the *pinax*", but the Spartans are not able to do this until Gorgo comes to their assistance.

15 For *grammata* of 'letters' in the sense of epistles, cf. 5.14.1. The regular word in Herodotus for a letter is *bublion* (21x). The standard later word *epistole* appears only in the sense 'command' in Herodotus (4.10.1, 6.50.3).

Although in reality letters were extremely common as a mode of ordinary communication in the Near East, in Herodotus they are regularly associated with various forms of deviousness and under-handed dealings.

III. Greeks and Near Easterners

Historically, there was a major difference in the fifth century between Greeks and other neighbouring peoples in that, where the latter made great use of letters in the administration and politics of their empire, the Greeks did not. For countries other than Greece, "letters provided a regular means of communication within and between the Near Eastern kingdoms. Great Kings corresponded with their foreign counterparts, with viceregal sons, with vassal rulers, with officials appointed to provincial areas of their kingdoms".[16] In Greece however "the simple unbureaucratic structure of the early Greek states did not encourage the provision in advance of institutions directed to the initiation and systematic practice of diplomacy".[17] This continued to be true: "the conduct of diplomacy depended upon direct oral exchange and contact between organs of the various states. It did not depend upon indirect methods of communication, either by means of formal letters, at least until the Hellenistic era, or by means of third parties".[18] In general, in Greece, "both the habit of writing in general, and the specific practice of letter-writing as a mode of communication, remained restricted down to the closing decades of the fifth century".[19]

When we look at who writes letters in Herodotus, we seem to have a different picture, in that both Greeks and non-Greeks write them. On the Greek side, there are Polycrates, Histiaeus, Demaratus, Themistocles and Timoxenus; on the other, Harpagus the Mede, Cyrus, Oroetes (perhaps), Bagaeus, Darius and Artabazus the Persians, Nitetis the Babylonian, and Amasis the Egyptian. Steiner wished to see a more strict difference in the use of writing between Greeks and Near Easterners: "The fifth-century sources not only locate the activity outside the democratic government they celebrate as a distinctly Greek [...] achievement, but also emphasise its foreignness. Far from being an integral part of the identity the Greeks construct for themselves, writing is the technology employed by those who would destroy their

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16 Bryce 2003: 58.
17 Adcock and Mosely 1975: 11.
18 Adcock and Mosely 1975: 152.
19 Trapp 2003: 6.

uniquely successful way of life".[20] To maintain this dichotomy, the Ionian letter-writers have to be classed with the Easterners: "the monarchs of Persian and Egypt [...] are [...] with the self-styled tyrants of Ionia, the principal letter writers of Herodotus' tales".[21] She generally sees the use of writing by Eastern rulers as a symbol of the oppressive control exercised by them over their empires, seen most symbolically in the way they cover lands and bodies with writing.

There is a good deal of truth in what she says about writing in Herodotus, though she perhaps pushes her case too hard, and I am not sure the distinction between Greeks and Persians is that clear. Histiaeus *is* a Greek and opposed to Persian domination of Greeks. Timoxenus is not a tyrant but he is one of the rare letter-writers.[22] Demaratus and Themistocles' letters are more of a problem. Demaratus writes from an Eastern location, but is still a mainland Greek. Steiner attempts to explain Themistocles away by arguing that he is writing to Ionians who are "fully members of the Persian as of the Greek world", that he writes in Greek terms and that "the words, unlike the secret communications of the Eastern kings, seek as broad a public as they can reach, posted at the most frequented spots like the polis's inscribed decrees"; furthermore, the fact that Leotychidas makes a similar plea orally (9.98.2–4) recovers Themistocles' writing for the oral tradition.[23]

These do not seem entirely persuasive arguments, and one might note that immediately after the account of Themistocles' inscriptions the Persian King invites his men to visit Thermopylae in a spoken message. There is also an instructive episode where the simple homology Greek : Easterner :: oral message : written letter is broken down. Amasis initially, as one would expect of an Egyptian Pharaoh, writes a warning letter to Polycrates, who responds in kind. However, when Amasis realises that Polycrates is doomed and wishes to call their friendship off, he does not send a letter, but a herald (*keryx*).[24] In the Greek world, the *keryx* was the oldest and most august form of messenger, more so than the *presbeus* ("emissary") or the *angelos* ("messenger").[25] The formal termination of this friendship is carried out in the Greek manner, rather than by an Eastern letter. In Diodorus (1.95.3),

[20] Steiner 1994: 7.
[21] Steiner 1994: 150.
[22] He might be saved for the theory by his association with the Persians.
[23] Steiner 1994: 153–154.
[24] It is worth noting that generally Easterners send heralds as much as Greeks.
[25] Cf. Adcock and Mosley 1975: 152–154. Generally in Herodotus, Greek messengers, if not 'heralds', are most often *presbeis*, with non-Greeks being *angeloi*.

the means of communication are reversed: Amasis uses a letter to close the friendship. One can compare Nehemiah 6.1–7, where Sanballat and Geshem send a messenger to Nehemiah four times about a wall they are unhappy with, and four times he gives an unsatisfactory answer: "then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand" (5). The letter is the formal means of communication in the East; it remains true that most writing is done in the East and that Easterners write more than Greeks, but the distinction is not absolute.

IV. Formal Features

Given that we have but one pre-Herodotean Greek letter, it is not easy to say whether Greek and foreign letters were distinct in formal ways. One thing is clear however, that non-Greek letters tend to have more or less formal openings. These vary enormously of course, from simple beginnings such as "To my lords *x* and *y*, your servant *z*. The welfare of my lords may all the gods, all of them, seek after at all times",[26] or the opening of the letter reputed to be from Darius to Gadatas: βασιλεὺς βασιλέων Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεω Γαδάται δούλωι τάδε λέγει ("The King of Kings Darius says this to his servant Gadatas, son of Hystaspes"),[27] to the more elaborately fulsome formulaic openings found at Amarna:

> With me all is well. With you may all be well. With your household, your wives, your sons, your dignitaries, your horses, your chariots, your countries, may all be very well. With me all is well. With my household, my wives, my sons, my dignitaries, my horses, my many troops, all is well, and in my countries all is very well.[28]

The earliest Greek letter, the 'Berezan Lead Letter' from Achillodorus to his son Protagoras of around 500 found in the Ukraine, begins with a simple preamble: ὦ Πρωταγόρη, ὁ πατήρ τοι ἐπιστέλλε· ἀδικε͂ταῖ ὑπὸ Ματάσυος ... ("Protagoras, your father writes to you: he is being treated unjustly by Matasys").[29] It may well be that the form of this letter was influenced by the style of Near Eastern letters: it shows "a lack of familiarity with what are later to emerge as standard conventions of letter writing" in Greek.[30] However,

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[26] Cf. e.g. *The Jedaniah Archive* B14, in Porten et al. 1996: 127–129.
[27] Meiggs and Lewis 1988: no. 12.
[28] Moran 1992: no. 1.1–9.
[29] *IGDOlbia* 23 (= *SEG* 26.845); cf. Trapp 2003: no. 1.
[30] Trapp 2003: 6. Trapp also suggests that the letter may convey "a sense that send-

Nicias' letter from Sicily, read to the Assembly in Thuc. 7.11, lacks a formal epigraph, beginning simply τὰ μὲν πρότερον πραχθέντα, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐν ἄλλαις ἐπιστολαῖς ἴστε … ("You are aware, Athenians, of earlier events from other letters …").

When we look at the instances of the quoted letters in Herodotus, we find that there are traces of such preambles, but that the preambles are not simply used in a purely formulaic manner but can be integrated more into the context of the story. Amasis' letter to Polycrates does announce the author's name and wish prosperity to the recipient, but the latter has a purpose beyond politeness. This is the beginning of Amasis' letter (3.40.1–3):

> Amasis says this to Polycrates. It is good to learn that a friend and ally is doing well, but your great good fortune troubles me, since I understand that the gods are jealous. I want myself and those I care for to have some success in some affairs, but to fail in others, and so spend our lives with differing fortune, rather than being universally successful. For I have heard of no-one who was fortunate in all things, who did not end badly and in utter destruction.

This combines the '*x* says this …' formula with reference to good fortune, but this is not used simply as the traditional wish for happiness, but is given a twist by the addition of the wish that Polycrates should *not* be so fortunate, and then becomes a rather Greek speculation on the transience of such fortune.[31] The Near Eastern formula is given a new lease of life through being used for a Greek ethical discourse.

Similarly, Harpagus begins his letter with "O son of Cambyses, the gods watch over you, or you would not have been so fortunate. Now take vengeance on your killer Astyages" (1.124.1). There is no statement of the author's identity, but the formulaic wish for good fortune is visible, though it is here a statement of fact and a reason to seek greater good fortune. By contrast (because he is a Greek writing to Greeks?), Themistocles' letters begin simply "Ionians, you do wrong …" (8.22.1), with no reference to prosperity.

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ing a message by this particular means is a measure for emergencies only", which recalls Herodotus' use of letters at crucial moments.

31 Cf. e.g. Solon's discussions with Croesus (1.30–33), and Herodotus programmatic statement about "knowing that human happiness never stays in the same place" (1.5.4).

V. Blurred Communication

The blurring of the conventions of written and oral communication seen in this last letter is a common feature in Herodotus.[32] The uncertainty often comes from the fact that all Herodotus says is something like πέμψας ἔλεγε ("having sent, he said"), and it is unclear whether a messenger or a letter is involved. Themistocles' 'appeals to the lonians', though inscribed on stone, are in effect an open letter: they fulfil the criteria often laid down for recognising a letter, an addressee (ἄνδρες Ἴωνες), a physical medium, the separation of the writer from the reader etc.[33] At the same time, they have the flavour of a speech, and it is noteworthy that in the next chapter the corresponding piece of communication on the Persian side, Xerxes' address to his soldiers inviting them to visit the battlefield of Thermopylae, is in the form of a speech, similarly addressed to ἄνδρες σύμμαχοι (24.2).[34] The distinction between inscription, speech, and letter is clearly porous here.

At times, despite the prevalence of the letter in the historical East, it looks as though no letter is implied, and that the messenger simply repeats the message, as with Croesus' messengers to Sparta: "They arrived and said: 'Croesus, king of the Lydians and other races, sent us saying this: 'O Lacedaemonians, since the god has declared that I should make the Greek my friend…''" (1.69).[35] Or the messenger may be elided, as in "Datis sent a messenger and said to them: 'Priests, why are you running away?'" (6.97.1–2).

Less clear is 3.122: "Oroetes, having sent a message (ἀγγελίην), said this: 'Oroetes says to Polycrates as follows (ὧδε λέγει). I hear that you have set your mind on great deeds.'" ὧδε λέγει is found at the start of Amasis' letter to Polycrates, which might suggest a letter here. Historical 'reality' would suggest one was involved, but Herodotus sees no need to specify.[36]

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[32] Cf. de Bakker 2007: 49–66 on such 'transported speeches', with 58–59 on letters. On the kind of blurring between epistolary and other categories of communication discussed in this section see also Gera, below pp. 86–87; on epistolarity and orality see further Kasprzyk (pp. 272–274, 287) and Olson (pp. 359–360).

[33] A useful brief discussion in Trapp 2003: 1.

[34] Leotychidas' later comparable appeal to the Ionians to support the Greeks, also beginning ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, is again conveyed in speech by a herald (9.98).

[35] The Berezan Lead Letter also has the writer quoting directly the words of his opponent Matasys: "he says: 'Ana⟨xa⟩goras has my property, male and female slaves and houses'".

[36] There is a similar case in 5.24.1: "Darius, having sent a messenger to the fort of Myrcinus, said: 'Histiaeus, King Darius says this'".

A more complex example of this kind of uncertainty is found in the speech of Alexander I of Macedon to the Athenians after Salamis (8.140α):

> When he came to Athens, sent by Mardonius, he said this: "Athenians, Mardonius says this (Μαρδόνιος τάδε λέγει): 'A message has come to me from the king saying as follows (ἀγγελίη … λέγουσα οὕτως): 'I forgive the Athenians all the crimes they have committed against me.' So now, Mardonius, do as this: give them back their land, and let them chose whichever other land they like, and let them govern themselves. Rebuild all their shrines which I burned, if they are willing to side with me.' Since these commands have come, I must do this, unless you prevent me from doing so. I say this to you …"

This is a speech, but again it makes use of epistolary formulae and both Mardonius' words to Alexander and Xerxes' to Mardonius would in reality have been written. By eliding any idea of a letter, Herodotus is able to produce a more dramatic scene,[37] with the various characters appearing to speak in their own persons rather than through the formality of a letter.[38]

Finally, Nitetis' inscriptions (1.187) are plainly just that, but Herodotus shifts the genre in the second case. That on the outside of the tomb is formal and not particularly epistolary: "If any king of Babylon after me is short of money, let him open this tomb and take as much as he likes: but if he is not short, let him not open it; it will not be a good idea" (1.187.2). Darius ignores this warning, and finds inside another inscription which, with its shift to the second person, is much closer to a letter in nature and creates a more dramatic ending to the story: "If you were not greedy for money and avaricious, you would not have opened the resting-places of the dead" (1.187.5).

This blurring is also to be found in the language that Herodotus uses to talk of these communications. Take the phrase that introduces Themistocles' letters: τὰ δὲ γράμματα τάδε ἔλεγε ("the letters said the following"). Outside Herodotus, it is unusual to find the verb λέγω used of inanimate objects, but Herodotus uses it 35 times, 9 times with γράμματα, but also with

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37 For the dramatic use of different modes of address, cf. above on Nitetis' inscriptions (1.187), and 3.119, where Intaphernes' wife receives via a messenger two questions from Darius in the form "Woman, King Darius …", and replies in the first instance to the messenger ("if the King …"), but in the second to Darius himself ("O King …").

38 Cf. further Bowie 2007: 229–230. There is an interesting parallel to this nesting of speakers in one of the Fortification Tablets from Persepolis: "Tell Harrenâ the cattle-chief, Parnaka spoke as follows: 'Darius the king ordered me saying: '100 sheep from my estate (are) to be issued to Irtashduna [Gk. Artystone] the princess' '" (FT 6764). The nesting is complex: the author of the tablet, Parnaka, quotes Darius' order to him, which he now via the tablet instructs his messenger to give to Harrenâ. Cf. also FT 1792, 1806.

e.g. ἀγγελίη, λόγος, χρησμοί, a tripod (5.60), or a statue (2.141.6).[39] Thus, when Mardonius says ἐμοὶ ἀγγελίη ἥκει παρὰ βασιλέος λέγουσα οὕτως, the use of the verb, which is normally applied to persons, with ἀγγελίη blurs messenger and message. Svenbro appositely compares striking passages in Aeschylus' *Septem*, such as the figure on Capaneus' shield who χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν "πρήσω πόλιν" ("cries out in golden letters 'I shall burn the city'", 434): the letters are embossed or inscribed on the shield, but are attributed to the voice of the man.[40]

This uncertainty about the precise genre of communication is not just a feature of Herodotus however, but can be found in Eastern texts. For instance, the rock-cut Bisitun inscription includes regular personal address to the reader in the manner of a letter or speech: "Darius the King says: 'You who shall hereafter look at this inscription which I have written down, and these sculptures, do not destroy (them)'".[41] At the same time, "it [the inscription] has been written both on clay tablets and on parchment [...] Afterwards I have sent this inscription in all directions among the lands".[42] The question is thus raised of the difference between an imperial inscription and an imperial letter which is a copy of that inscription.

VI. Conclusion

In Herodotus therefore, the letter is something of a *rara avis*, the quoted letter even *rarior*. This is very probably a genuine reflection of the rarity of letter-writing in Greece at this time, but it contrasts with what we know from the historical sources of the bureaucratic organisation of communications in the Eastern empires. Such letters as there are are significantly placed in the context of the most important events of the work, and are especially connected with trickery and deceit. Though Easterners generally write and inscribe more than Greeks, there is no hard and fast division between the two sets of peoples. Herodotus' letters show traces of the formal qualities of Eastern letters, though he can give them a twist so that the formulae

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39 Cf. Powell 1977 s.v. λέγω A II; LSJ s.v. λέγω quotes only Thuc. 6.54.7, an inscription γράμμασι λέγον τάδε, and a Roman edict. The same seems true of other words for speaking.

40 434; cf. 468 (a man on Eteocles' shield): βοᾷ δὲ χοὗτος γραμμάτων ἐν ξυλλαβαῖς, on letters speaking in Eur. *Hipp.*; 646–647 (Justice on Polynices' shield): Δίκη δ' ἄρ' εἶναί φησιν, ὡς τὰ γράμματα | λέγει· 'κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε ...' (see Rosenmeyer, this volume pp. 61–62). Cf. Svenbro 1988: 195–196.

41 DB IV § 65 (tr. M. Brosius in Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella 2007: 529–537).

42 DB IV § 70 (trans. Brosius).

play their part in the story. In many cases of communication, it is not clear precisely what mode is being used, and Herodotus blurs the distinction between letters, inscriptions and spoken messages for various purposes, such as creating greater drama in the episode. If one has the clear sense that the concept of a 'letter', as a specific and recognisable genre different from other types of text, is not yet fully formed in Greece at this period, Herodotus nonetheless points the way to the rich future the letter was to have in later literature.

LETTERS IN XENOPHON

Deborah Levine Gera

Xenophon was a prolific author who composed works in a variety of genres, and letters are a natural, everyday part of both his fictional and historical compositions. Thus, the fictional Persians of the *Cyropaedia* write letters, just as the actual Persians—and Greeks—of the *Hellenica* or the *Anabasis* do.[1] At first sight, these letters seem to be an ordinary means of communication, simply a part of Xenophon's world and writings, without the air of secrecy and intrigue of many of the earlier letters found in Homer, Greek tragedy, and Herodotus. A closer look, however, reveals that a great many of the letters specifically mentioned by Xenophon in his works are not simply messages which follow a smooth path from sender to addressee. We are made to see that an epistle is a fragile and precarious means of communication which often cannot stand on its own. Some letters need external trappings, such as a royal seal, and an impressive carrier. Others need to be read aloud, at times in an incomprehensible foreign tongue. Several of the letters mentioned by Xenophon do not reach their destination. They are intercepted by enemies, delivered to a third party by a treacherous messenger, or rejected by the intended recipient. Nor is the content of the letters necessarily straightforward: letters in Xenophon can be falsified documents, filled with treacherous intent, or written under duress. This tension between letters as an everyday means of communication and the precariousness of the very medium of letters is found in many of Xenophon's epistles.

An illuminating passage in the *Memorabilia* (4.2.11–18) demonstrates how writing was taken for granted in Xenophon's world. Socrates is cross-examining young Euthydemus, an avid collector of books, on the meaning of justice, and suggests to him that they write down a series of qualities under two headings, *delta* for *dikaiosune* (justice) and *alpha* for *adikia* (injustice). Both the use of a written list in the course of this philosophical discussion and the casual abbreviation of a word by using its opening letter point to a

[1] See e.g. *Cyr*. 2.2.9; *Hell*. 5.1.31; *Anab*. 3.1.4–5 respectively.

milieu comfortable with writing. It is not surprising, then, to discover that letters are regularly found in Xenophon's writings.[2] Letters are a part of his everyday world, to be fashioned, cited, or briefly mentioned at will. It is significant that Xenophon is the first Greek literary writer to include the standard opening and closing formulae of letters,[3] and no less significant that he uses these conventional salutations in a fictional letter addressed to an invented figure.

The terms used by Xenophon for letters—γράμματα and ἐπιστολή—encompass many kinds of brief written materials dispatched from one place to another. These 'letters' include treaty provisions, inventories and lists, military dispatches, letters of recommendation, as well as letters of a more personal nature.[4]

One ordinary letter, albeit a letter with far-reaching effects, is addressed to Xenophon himself. In a famous passage of the *Anabasis*, Xenophon first introduces himself, and then explains how he joined the Ten Thousand, after his friend Proxenus summoned him.

> Ἦν δέ τις ἐν τῇ στρατιᾷ Ξενοφῶν Ἀθηναῖος, ὃς οὔτε στρατηγὸς οὔτε λοχαγὸς οὔτε στρατιώτης ὢν συνηκολούθει, ἀλλὰ Πρόξενος αὐτὸν μετεπέμψατο οἴκοθεν ξένος ὢν ἀρχαῖος· ὑπισχνεῖτο δὲ αὐτῷ, εἰ ἔλθοι, φίλον αὐτὸν Κύρῳ ποιήσειν, ὃν αὐτὸς ἔφη κρείττω ἑαυτῷ νομίζειν τῆς πατρίδος. ὁ μέντοι Ξενοφῶν ἀναγνοὺς τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀνακοινοῦται Σωκράτει τῷ Ἀθηναίῳ περὶ τῆς πορείας. καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης ὑποπτεύσας μή τι πρὸς τῆς πόλεως ὑπαίτιον εἴη Κύρῳ φίλον γενέσθαι, ὅτι ἐδόκει ὁ Κῦρος προθύμως τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀθήνας συμπολεμῆσαι, συμβουλεύει τῷ Ξενοφῶντι ἐλθόντα εἰς Δελφοὺς ἀνακοινῶσαι τῷ θεῷ περὶ τῆς πορείας.

> There was an Athenian in the army named Xenophon, who was neither a general nor a captain nor an ordinary soldier, but accompanied them, because Proxenus, an old friend of his, had sent for him from home. Proxenus promised him that if he would come, he would make him a friend of Cyrus, whom, he said, he valued more than his own native land. After reading the letter, Xenophon consulted with Socrates the Athenian about the expedition. Socrates, who suspected that the city would find fault if he became a friend of Cyrus, since Cyrus was thought to have aided the Spartans actively in their

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[2] See Eidinow and Taylor 2010 on the evidence provided by actual lead letters for the widespread use of writing in the Classical period.

[3] The letter at *Cyr.* 4.5.27–33 begins with Κῦρος Κυαξάρῃ χαίρειν ("Cyrus to Cyaxares greetings") and ends with ἔρρωσο ("Farewell"); see further below, pp. 98–102. Trapp 2003: 37 points out that Xenophon's "matter-of-factness" in using these formulae suggests that he is "following convention rather than forging it."

[4] Treaty provisions: *Hell.* 5.1.32; 6.3.9; 7.1.37–40; inventories and lists: *Cyr.* 7.4.12–13; 8.2.16–18; cf. *Hell.* 3.3. 8–9; military dispatches: *Hell.* 1.1.23; 1.7.4, 17; letters of recommendation: *Hell.* 1.4.3; *Anab.* 7.2.8; personal letters: *Anab.* 1.6.3; 3.1.5; *Cyr.* 2.2.9–10; 4.5.26–34; *Ages.* 8.3.

> war against Athens, advised Xenophon to go to Delphi and consult with the god about the expedition. (Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.4–5[5])

If we look carefully at the wording of the passage, we can see that at first Xenophon simply says that Proxenus has sent for him (Πρόξενος αὐτὸν μετεπέμψατο), promising to make him a friend of Cyrus. If we were to stop reading here and go no further, we might well imagine that Proxenus sent a messenger to Xenophon, a messenger who delivered a brief oral invitation. But continuing along the passage, we then hear that Proxenus' message is in the form of a letter which Xenophon reads (ἀναγνοὺς τὴν ἐπιστολήν). This bit of information—that the message was a written one—seems almost an accidental or arbitrary addition, for it is the content of the message and not its actual form that is important to Xenophon here. Our brief passage in the *Anabasis* teaches us, then, to look carefully at the verb πέμπω in its various forms in the works of Xenophon, for there may well be dozens of letters, actual, but unrecorded, hiding behind the simple ἔπεμπε, ἔπεμψε, μετεπέμψατο etc. of our texts. Indeed, it is a challenging exercise to check places in Xenophon, particularly in the *Anabasis* and *Hellenica*, where we are told that a message has been sent, and try to determine whether the actual message was an oral or a written one.[6] However, unlike Herodotus, where this blurring of categories seems due to the transition in his time from oral messages to written ones,[7] in Xenophon this lack of distinction may be due to narrative economy or a lack of interest on his part.

Xenophon decides to consult with Socrates after reading Proxenus' letter, but we are not told if he handed over Proxenus' letter to Socrates and had him read it as well or if he summarised the contents of the letter, adding to or perhaps detracting from Proxenus' words. Proxenus' letter is a pivotal document, one which determined the course of young Xenophon's entire life, but judging by what we know both of actual letters and literary epistles of the period, it must have been fairly short.[8] Xenophon seems to be quoting from the actual letter in our text when he says that Proxenus thought more highly of Cyrus than of his own homeland (ὃν αὐτὸς ἔφη κρείττω ἑαυτῷ νομίζειν τῆς πατρίδος) and the reservations Socrates has about Xenophon's

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5 All translations are my own.

6 See e.g. *Hell.* 3.4.6; 5.2.38; 6.4.1 and the further passages cited by Kelly 1985: 150.

7 See Bowie, this volume pp. 80–82, on porous, blurred categories of communication in Herodotus; on epistolarity and orality, see Kasprzyk (pp. 272–274, 287) and Olson (pp. 359–360).

8 See e.g. Letters 1–2 in Trapp 2003: 50–51; Eidinow and Taylor 2010; van den Hout 1949: esp. 37–38.

plan to join the expedition of Cyrus focus precisely on their joint homeland, Athens, and the objections that the Athenians might have to aiding Cyrus. Socrates, at any rate, advises Xenophon to consult the god at Delphi about the journey and Xenophon then manages to win Apollo's approval. He does so, it should be recalled, not by raising the question of whether he should actually go on the expedition or not, but by asking which gods should be sacrificed to, if he is to ensure the success of his journey. Socrates, as Xenophon himself notes, sees through this maneuver and disapproves, but he tells Xenophon to do as the god has commanded (*Anab*. 3.1.6–7).

It seems that Socrates' disapproval of Xenophon's expedition disturbed the ancients, for we know of at least two later letters, pseudepigrapha, which touch upon this disagreement between Socrates and Xenophon and try to rewrite history, as it were, casting the matter in a better light by means of letters. Thus we find a letter in the Socratic epistles (Letter 5), perhaps dating to the first century BC, supposedly written by Socrates to Xenophon shortly after he leaves to join Proxenus. In this letter, Socrates puts aside his compunctions about the enterprise and offers his young associate moral support and encouragement, reminding him of their earlier discussions of virtue. A recent commentator on the letter, Costa, describes Socrates of the epistle as "generously associating himself with the venture."[9] In the epistolary novel by Chion of Heraclea, dated to the first century AD, young Chion writes to his father of his meeting with Xenophon at Byzantium in 400–399 BC (Letter 3). Chion is impressed by the tall and handsome Xenophon, a commanding, serene figure, who keeps his plundering soldiers under control. Young Chion stresses that Socrates' influence upon Xenophon is apparent in his civilized manner of speech and his ability to combine military expertise with a philosophical outlook.[10] These later Greek writers do not allow any hint of a rift between Socrates and Xenophon, despite Xenophon's own account in the *Anabasis*, and they use epistles to underline the positive relationship between the two.

We know of one letter telling of Xenophon which was written in his own lifetime, a letter of introduction written for Xenophon himself. We learn in the *Anabasis* (7.2.8) that the Spartan admiral Anaxibius gives Xenophon a ship of thirty oars, a letter of introduction, and sends with him a man (καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτῷ τριακόντορον καὶ ἐπιστολὴν καὶ ἄνδρα συμπέμπει) to tell the

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[9] Costa 2001: 169; see too 80–81, 170.

[10] Chion *Ep*. 3.6: μάλιστα γὰρ δὴ μετασχὼν τῶν Σωκράτους λόγων ἀρκεῖ καὶ στρατεύματα καὶ πόλεις σώζειν; see Costa 2001: 108–113, 179–180.

people of Perinthus to supply him with mounts so as to reach the army as soon as possible. It is interesting that neither a letter nor a messenger suffice on their own and it is the combination of the two that will guarantee Xenophon his horses. It is likely that the letter, written by a Spartan, was quite brief and did not contain a lengthy, flattering description of the kind found in Chion's epistolary novel, but simply a line or two.

In the *Hellenica*, a brief Spartan letter is quoted in full. Xenophon tells of a letter written by the Spartans after they have been soundly defeated at Cyzicus in 411. The letter is written by Hipparchus, the Spartan vice-admiral, who is called an ἐπιστολεύς. This kind of naval officer was also termed an ἐπιστολιαφόρος (*Hell.* 6.2.25), indicating that dispatches were a significant part of the job. Hipparchos' laconic letter—there is no other word to describe it—reads: "Timbers gone. Mindarus dead. Men starving. We don't know what to do". Ἔρρει τὰ κᾶλα. Μίνδαρος ἀπεσσύα. πεινῶντι τὤνδρες. ἀπορίομες τί χρὴ δρᾶν (*Hell.* 1.1.23) The dialect and the brevity of the letter are in the Spartan style, pure and simple,[11] and it seems as if Xenophon is reproducing Hipparchos' actual dispatch, captured by the Athenians. The direct quotation of the Spartan's words adds colour and spice to Xenophon's report, and he makes good narrative use of the letter as well, for reading on in the passage (*Hell.* 1.1.24), we find that the Persian commander Pharnabazus answers the Spartans' concerns, point by point.[12] It is almost as if he has read the intercepted letter as well. "Don't worry about the ships," the Persian commander reassures the defeated Spartans. "There is plenty of timber in the King's territory. Here is money for food and clothing. I'm taking charge—build ships and guard my coast." The only sentence in the letter that Pharnabazus does not react to is the one telling of the death of Mindarus the admiral; that is a problem that he cannot solve. This very brief Spartan letter—the modern equivalent would be an e-mail or a text message on a cell phone—serves a double function, both underlining Spartan βραχυλογία and characterizing Pharnabazus as a perceptive and efficient commander.

The Spartans' intercepted dispatch is one of a series of letters found in Xenophon that do not reach their intended addressee, and here we see the danger inherent in letters, small physical objects which can be diverted from

[11] There may be a pun here as well. τὰ κᾶλα means "timber" or "wood," and Hipparchus is saying that the Spartan ships are gone, but their good record, τὰ καλά, is gone as well; see *Hell.* 5.4.32 and Gray 1989: 13.

[12] Krentz 1989: 101 ad loc.

their proper destination.[13] One crucial letter to go astray is that written by a brilliant Persian commander, Orontas, who seesaws between an alliance with the Persian king Artaxerxes II and his rebellious brother, Cyrus. In our passage, Orontas is part of Cyrus' forces. He asks Cyrus for a large contingent of cavalry, allegedly in order to attack Artaxerxes, but in fact with the intention of defecting to the king, and when Cyrus grants his request, he sends a secret letter to Artaxerxes.

> ὁ δ' Ὀρόντας νομίσας ἑτοίμους εἶναι αὐτῷ τοὺς ἱππέας γράφει ἐπιστολὴν παρὰ βασιλέα ὅτι ἥξοι ἔχων ἱππέας ὡς ἂν δύνηται πλείστους· ἀλλὰ φράσαι τοῖς αὑτοῦ ἱππεῦσιν ἐκέλευεν ὡς φίλιον αὐτὸν ὑποδέχεσθαι. ἐνῆν δὲ ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ καὶ τῆς πρόσθεν φιλίας ὑπομνήματα καὶ πίστεως. ταύτην τὴν ἐπιστολὴν δίδωσι πιστῷ ἀνδρί, ὡς ᾤετο· ὁ δὲ λαβὼν Κύρῳ δίδωσιν. ἀναγνοὺς δὲ αὐτὴν ὁ Κῦρος συλλαμβάνει Ὀρόνταν …
>
> Orontas, who thought that the cavalry would be given to him, wrote a letter to the King saying that he would come with as many horsemen as possible, and requesting that the King instruct his own cavalry to welcome him as a friend. The letter also included reminders of his past friendship and loyalty. Orontas gave this letter to a loyal man—or so he thought. This man took the letter and gave it to Cyrus, who arrested Orontas after reading it. (Xen. *Anab.* 1.6.3–4)

Here Xenophon simply summarises the contents of the letter, but again it is likely that the letter was quite brief, with Orontas' mention of his past good deeds no longer than a sentence or two. Loyalty and trust—or to be more accurate, disloyalty and deceit—are important motifs in the *Anabasis* and the double-dealing, disloyal Orontas well exemplifies these issues.[14] Xenophon tells us that Orontas entrusts his treacherous letter—a letter in which he protests his fidelity to one brother while betraying the other—to a supposedly loyal man (πιστῷ ἀνδρί, ὡς ᾤετο), but the messenger hands over the message to Cyrus. Cyrus reads the letter, arrests Orontas, and puts him on trial before seven Persian judges in the presence of the Greek leader, Clearchus. At the trial itself Cyrus cross-examines Orontas briefly, asking a series of sharp and pointed questions, and twice uses the word πιστός when analyzing Orontas' deceitful behavior (*Anab.* 1.6.7–8). Interestingly, no mention is made of the incriminating epistle in Xenophon's account of Orontas' trial. One commentator suggests that Orontas' letter to Artaxerxes was read aloud as part of the trial and translated into Greek for Clearchus,

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[13] For intercepted letters in other historiographers see further in this volume Bowie (p. 74 note 10) and Olson (p. 359 note 34).

[14] See e.g. Hirsch 1985: 14–38.

but there is no basis for this supposition in Xenophon's text.[15] Orontas is condemned to death and handed over to the most trusted of Cyrus' bodyguards (τοῦ πιστοτάτου τῶν Κύρου σκηπτούχων *Anab.* 1.6.11), presumably in order to be executed. Orontas' crime, letter, trial, and execution are all about the use and misuse of trust.

In the letters written by Proxenus and Hipparchus, we hear only of the epistles themselves, but nothing of the messengers who were responsible for their delivery. In the case of Orontas, the messenger entrusted with the letter is a crucial part of this tale of betrayal and counter-betrayal. When secret, devious letters need to be sent, the messenger frequently cannot be separated from the message. Even when a message is written and sealed, rather than oral and memorized, the messenger is still inextricably linked with its contents. At times, the very fact that two alleged enemies correspond with one another is enough to arouse suspicion (see below, pp. 96–97 on Agesilaus and Artaxerxes II). The courier who carries the treacherous letter must be loyal to his master, but secretive and devious with everyone else. Such messengers are faced with a difficult choice and often betray someone, either by delivering or not delivering the letter to its original addressee. Indeed, Orontas' letter-bearer, who informs on his master, walks in the footsteps of two figures found in Herodotus and Thucydides. In Herodotus (6.4), Hermippus is asked by Histiaeus to deliver a letter to various Persian nobles in Sardis, calling upon them to rebel against the satrap Artaphrenes. Hermippus chooses to betray his master and pass the letters along to Artaphrenes. The satrap then becomes a secret third party to the correspondence and this leads to the execution of those Persians who joined ranks with Histiaeus. Thucydides (1.128–133) tells of an extended correspondence between the Spartan leader Pausanias and Xerxes. The final courier sent by Pausanias to the Persian king is a former boyfriend who suspects that the letter he bears includes instructions that he should be killed. He opens Pausanias' letter, discovers the fatal postscript requesting his own death, and then hands the message over to the Spartan ephors, who have already been collecting evidence of Pausanias' treachery. Interestingly, Thucydides tells us that the Spartan ephors are not willing to use Pausanias' impounded letter as concrete evidence against him and they prefer to wait until they actually hear him pronounce treacherous words with his own lips (Thuc. 1.133.1). Rosenmeyer suggests that the Spartan leaders are justifiably suspicious of

[15] Lendle 1995: 51.

such written materials, since letters could be altered and seals forged.[16] In fact, Thucydides specifically tells us that Pausanias' messenger had forged a seal, in case he needed to reseal the letter he had opened. In this passage of Thucydides we find trickery on every possible level: Pausanias writes a treacherous letter, the courier betrays him, and the very trappings and guarantees of the letter's authenticity, the seal, are easily replaced by a forgery. Neither the writer, nor the messenger, nor the physical letter itself can be trusted. Such deceit and trickery in letters go back, of course, to the very earliest epistle found in Greek literature—Bellerophon's σήματα λυγρά in Book 6 of the *Iliad* (6.167–170). Another early figure is Palamedes, credited with the invention of writing or, at the very least, with the invention of several letters of the Greek alphabet. No sooner does Palamedes come up with his writing innovations than Odysseus forges a letter to him from Priam, leading to his execution for treachery. In the Palamedes tale, virtually the very first Greek letter ever written is a forgery and leads to death.[17]

Xenophon tells of a later Spartan traitor, Cinadon, and here the Spartan ephors make use of genuine—and falsified—written dispatches in order to capture and convict the traitor (*Hell.* 3.3.8–11). When the ephors wish to entrap Cinadon, they send him away from Sparta on a pretext, providing him with a list of people supposedly to be arrested, written as an official dispatch.[18] Here the outer trappings of a letter, the semblance of an official document, serve as a trap. The soldiers who accompany Cinadon then arrest and interrogate him outside of the city, writing down the names of his fellow conspirators. This written list is quickly brought back to Sparta, leading to the arrest of the other conspirators, and then to the trial of Cinadon himself, back in Sparta. In this fashion, Xenophon's ephors forge an official dispatch, while at the same time requiring a written list of names—rather than an oral one—as a basis for further arrests.

Written reports feature in Athenian legal proceedings as well, as we see in Xenophon's report of the trial of the Athenian generals who fought—and won—at Arginusae in 406. The Athenian generals are on trial for failing to

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[16] Rosenmeyer 2001: 56.

[17] Stesichorus *PMG* 213; Gorg. *Palamedes* 30; Alcidamas *Ulix.* 22; Eur. *Palamedes* frr. See the excellent discussion of Palamedes and writing in Jenkins 2006: 15–36; and in this volume Bowie (p. 71), Rosenmeyer (pp. 60-66) and Bär (pp. 230–232).

[18] ἔδοσαν τὴν σκυτάλην ἐκείνῳ, ἐν ᾗ γεγραμμένοι ἦσαν οὓς ἔδει συλληφθῆναι (*Hell.* 3. 3. 9; cf. 8). Whatever its earlier meaning, *skytale* here does not seem to imply a secret message stick; see West 1988: esp. 43; Kelly 1985: esp. 151–152. Elsewhere in Xenophon *skytale* is used of brief messages sent by the Spartans to their allies (*Hell.* 5.2.34, 37).

collect and bring home the shipwrecked survivors of the battle as well as the bodies of the dead. At their trial, the generals' own written report, a letter which they had sent to the Council and the Assembly, is used by the prosecution against them. In their letter to the authorities, the generals blamed a severe storm for their failure to recover the wounded and dead, but it seems that they wrote the letter under duress. A speaker on their behalf states that they had originally intended to write in their letter that they had delegated the task of recovery to their lieutenants, Theramenes and Thrasybulus, who had then failed to carry out the job. The generals were subsequently persuaded to revise their letter home, skipping over the part played by their inefficient lieutenants, and simply blaming the storm (*Hell.* 1.7.4–7, 17). Here we hear of the wheeling and dealing which accompanies the writing of an Athenian military dispatch and see the contents of an official letter manipulated for political purposes. It seems a safe bet that such Athenian letters were considerably longer than the Spartan message cited above. The longest and most famous letter home written by an Athenian general is the letter found in Thucydides (7.11–15), a letter sent from Sicily by Nicias. Commentators, ancient and modern, argue whether Nicias' lengthy, detailed letter is an authentic epistle or a thinly disguised speech.[19] Since Xenophon only refers to the letter sent by the Arginusae generals and does not reproduce it, we cannot compare the two military dispatches and see just how unique Nicias' letter was.

We hear of revisions of letters in response to pressure and criticism at the Persian court as well, and in one particular instance Xenophon allows us to be present at the scene, as it were, as a letter is being formulated and then revised. In 367 BC, a letter—which in fact amounts to a treaty setting out the relations between Thebes, Sparta, and Athens—is written at the court of Artaxerxes II, at the behest of Pelopidas and the Thebans, with Pelopidas virtually dictating the various clauses to the Persian king. Letters, accompanied by seals, were the means by which the king ruled his vast empire, in addition to arranging bouts of peace among the unruly Greeks. His decrees and proclamations were sent by letter, and satraps corresponded with the king in return, asking permission to act on their own initiative and justifying their deeds to the king. Here, after the terms were written down and read to the ambassadors present, an Athenian delegate voiced a

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19 Or perhaps it is a combination of the two; see Hornblower 2008 (iii): 554–560 (*ad* Thuc. 7.10–17); Rosenmeyer 2001: 57–60; van den Hout 1949: 36–41 and the further references cited by them.

provocative comment, not quite out of earshot, on the king's unfavorable attitude to the Athenians. When the king was told by his scribe (γραμματεύς) what the Athenian had said, he added an additional, ironic clause to the letter: "And if the Athenians know of any fairer way to deal with the situation, let them come to the king and tell him what it is." (*Hell.* 7.1.36–37). One cannot but feel sorry for the beleaguered Persian king. We see Artaxerxes literally being dictated to by Pelopidas, writing down his requests, and then reacting to a disgruntled Athenian's remarks. At the end of the day, he is wasting his time, for the squabbling Greek cities do not even accept the dictates of the royal letter, after the Thebans call together representatives from the various cities to hear what the king has written.[20] This look behind the scenes at the formulation of a royal letter is quite surprising. In Herodotus (1.99–100) we hear of Deioces, the first king of the Medes, who conducts his affairs through messengers and renders his judgements in writing in order to keep his subjects at a distance and add ceremony and pomp to his person. Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F178a) tells of a Persian or perhaps Assyrian queen Atossa who introduced letters as a means of communication with her subjects in order to limit access to her person. Deioces needs to rise above the fellow Medes who have chosen him to be king and Atossa wishes to hide the fact that she is a female ruler, not a male. Letters lend these two rulers distance, weight, and majesty, and this is a far cry from the scene described by Xenophon, with its crowd of competitive Greeks, jostling for the king's attention and favor. Royal letters have lost their majesty and grandeur in Xenophon's account.

Xenophon tells us that the Persian emissary who came to the Greeks with Artaxerxes II's royal document showed the king's seal and read aloud the contents of the letter to the Greek delegates (καὶ ὁ Πέρσης ὁ φέρων τὰ γράμματα δείξας τὴν βασιλέως σφραγῖδα ἀνέγνω τὰ γεγραμμένα Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.39). While the Greeks rejected the terms of this letter, the Persian king was nonetheless a force to be reckoned with, and another letter of his which Xenophon mentions, which listed the terms of the King's Peace of 386 *was* eventually ratified by the warring Greeks. Here, too, we are told that a Persian representative of the king, Tiribazus, first showed the king's seal on the document and then read the letter aloud. The letter began, "King Artaxerxes

[20] Xenophon may be poking fun here at the Persians and their king. It is probably not a coincidence that in a passage separating the description of the writing of the letter from its reading aloud in Greece (*Hell.* 7.1.38), Xenophon sandwiches some anti-Persian remarks made by one of the Greek delegates.

regards the following arrangements as just …" (᾿Αρταξέρξης βασιλεὺς νομίζει δίκαιον …, *Hell.* 5.1.31). While this does not quite have the autocratic tone used by the 'king of kings,' Darius when writing to his 'servant,' the satrap Gadatas, Artaxerxes' opening words underline the king's authority.[21]

These Persian-Greek encounters at the king's court and on Greek territory raise interesting questions about the means of communication between the Persians and the Greeks. Was the king's scribe, his γραμματεύς, bi-lingual? Did he translate Pelopidas' suggested terms to the king, as he later translated the remark blurted out by the angry Athenian? And what of the Persian representatives who read the king's letters aloud to the Greeks? What language were they reading? Were the letters in Aramaic, the language of Persian administration? Perhaps these Persian envoys needed to be tri-lingual, with knowledge of Greek, Persian, and Aramaic. If we assume that Persian messengers were reading a foreign language to the Greeks, one that needed to be translated, then it may have well been the very sound of the alien language, even more than the content of the letter, which lent it authority. Such a recital was perhaps the aural equivalent of examining the Persian royal seal[22] and looking upon a Persian courier dressed in foreign garb: all these Persian trappings were, it seems, authoritative precisely because they were exotic and not readily comprehended. Xenophon tells us that when Cyrus the Younger became a satrap at the age of fifteen, he carried with him a letter from the king with a royal seal and exhibited it to those in his domain. The letter said, among other things, "I am sending Cyrus as caranon of those who marshal at Castolus." "'Caranon' means 'lord'," Xenophon adds in explanation (*Hell.* 1.4.3), and commentators are not certain if the word is Persian or Doric Greek.[23] Here, too, one wonders how many of those who were shown Cyrus' letter could read and understand it, and it may well have been the external embellishments of the epistle, as well as young Cyrus' rich Persian dress, that mattered, rather than the actual content of the letter. Xenophon is sensitive to the question of oral communication across languages in the *Anabasis*, where he mentions, at times, interpreters, both anonymous and named, who translate for the Ten Thousand,[24] but he does not provide us

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21 Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεω Γαδάται δούλωι τάδε λέγει: ML 12; see Bowie, this volume p. 78, on the Darius-Gadatas letter.

22 See Bowie, this volume pp. 73–74, on the importance of the royal Persian seal.

23 ἐπιστολήν τε ἔφερε τοῖς κάτω πᾶσι τὸ βασίλειον σφράγισμα ἔχουσαν, ἐν ᾗ ἐνῆν καὶ τάδε· Καταπέμπω Κῦρον κάρανον τῶν εἰς Καστωλὸν ἀθροιζομένων. τὸ δὲ κάρανον ἔστι κύριον (*Hell.* 1.4.3). See Krentz 1989: 125–126 ad loc.

24 See e.g. *Anab.* 1.2.17; 2.3.17; 4.5.9–10; 5.4.4.

with any information on the mechanics of written correspondence between speakers of different languages. Such indifference to linguistic barriers is the rule, rather than the exception, in Classical Greek literature.[25] Thucydides (4.50) does mention letters carried by the Persian Artaphernes on his way to Sparta, letters captured by the Athenians, which were written in the Assyrian—that is Aramaic—script and had to be translated for the Athenians.[26] Elsewhere in Thucydides we see that Themistocles speaks of his desire to learn Persian in his treacherous secret letter to the Persian king, and there is no doubt that Pausanias wrote to Xerxes in Greek, for his letter was instantly legible to the Spartan courier who opened it (above, pp. 91–92). The Persian king must have had letters from the Greeks translated and then dictated a reply to be translated in turn. Letters written in different languages which must go through a series of intermediaries—translators as well as couriers—surely did not remain secret for long.

In one instance, Xenophon tells us of a one-sided exchange of letters between Persians and Greeks, when Agesilaus of Sparta, one of Xenophon's paradigmatic heroes, refuses to accept a personal letter from the Persian king. In his encomium to the Spartan king, the eponymous *Agesilaus*, Xenophon insists upon Agesilaus' dislike of Persia and Persian ways and devotes a section of the work to a direct comparison between the moderate, self-controlled Agesilaus and the lazy, luxury-loving Persian king. When a letter arrives from the Persian king offering *xenia* and friendship, Xenophon tells us, Agesilaus does not simply reject the letter. He reprimands the Persian envoy at length, asking him to deliver a message to the king. "There is no need for the king to send me private letters," says Agesilaus, "but if he gives proof of friendship for Sparta and goodwill towards Greece, I shall be his friend with all my heart. However, if he is found plotting against them, let him not hope to have me as a friend, however many letters I may receive." (*Ages*. 8.3–4).[27] Commentators suggest that neither Agesilaus nor Xenophon is being quite straightforward here.[28] Xenophon's mention of the letter may well be apologetic, an attempt to refute rumors that circulated concerning Agesilaus' excessive friendliness towards the Persian king and the letters he received from him. Artaxerxes presumably wrote to Agesilaus to ask for his help in suppressing rebellious satraps and Agesilaus probably refused

[25] See the references collected by Harrison 1998: n. 20.
[26] See Harrison 1998: n. 19; Hornblower 1996 (ii): 207 ad loc. on "Assyrian" as Aramaic.
[27] Compare Plut. *Mor*. 213d; *Ages*. 23.6.
[28] Hirsch 1985: 54–55 and 166 n. 33; Cartledge 1987: 201.

the offer for practical reasons, rather than ideological ones. Presumably the show Agesilaus puts on when rejecting the letter has greater propaganda value than actually reading the letter and sending back a curt, written refusal. Here it is worth remembering another rejection of a message by Agesilaus, an oral message telling of the disastrous Spartan defeat at Cnidus in 394 (*Hell.* 4.3.13). When Agesilaus learned of the destruction of the Spartan fleet and the death of its inexperienced commander, his brother-in-law, he decided to keep the bad news to himself and pretend that all was well. Agesilaus even offered thanks to the gods for the alleged victory and sent his friends portions of the meat from the sacrifice he had performed. This story teaches us to be suspicious of the Spartan king when he rejects a message and to look carefully underneath his surface reactions.[29] It is also worth comparing the oral messages from Cyrus which Clearchus secretly requests and then publicly rejects in order to impress the disgruntled Greeks (*Anab.* 1.3.8, 10). A public rejection of a message may simply be a show.

Letters also have a place in the fictional Persian world of the *Cyropaedia*, where Xenophon can invent as many incidents, characters, and epistles as he likes. Xenophon mentions the swift and efficient postal relay system set up by Cyrus the Great (*Cyr.* 8.6.17) and has a charming anecdote (2.2.6–10) of a letter accompanied by an entire band of armed Persian soldiers. Their leader has written a letter home and when he sends his chief lieutenant to fetch it, fifty soldiers, who have been too thoroughly drilled, follow in his wake. The conquered Lydian king Croesus plays a part in the *Cyropaedia* and he behaves much as the Persian kings of Xenophon's own time do, using writing and letters for record-keeping and administrative purposes. Thus, when Cyrus is about to depart from Sardis with many wagon loads of booty taken from the Lydian king, Croesus delivers to Cyrus an exact written record of the contents of each wagon. He recommends that Cyrus use these inventories to ensure that his men deliver all the goods entrusted to them. Cyrus replies that if his men were to steal, they would only be stealing from themselves, but nonetheless makes use of the lists (7.4.12–13). Letters are used again in a second encounter between Croesus and Cyrus (8.2.15–23). When Croesus chides Cyrus for distributing much of his fortune to friends and allies instead of storing it in treasuries, Cyrus arranges a little experiment. He sends his aide Hystaspas, accompanied by one of

[29] See *Ages.* 6.5–6 where Xenophon praises Agesilaus' powers of deception. Compare Gray 1989: 149–152 on changing bad news to good in the *Hellenica* and Xenophon's approval of such tactics.

Croesus' men, to his friends and allies, with a written request for a loan. The friends write down the sum they will be able to provide and Croesus' representative holds on to their letters. When they return, Croesus opens the letters and calculates the huge sums promised to Cyrus. Cyrus then points out the advantages of using friends as treasure-houses. It is interesting that a written record, sealed letters, do not suffice in this experiment and that two emissaries, one representing Cyrus and one representing Croesus, are sent on the mission as well. Written records both can and cannot be trusted; they are necessary, but not sufficient. Messengers, representing both parties to the experiment must come along as well, presumably to ensure that the letters are not tampered with. Cyrus includes in his original letter a request that his representative Hystaspas be treated as a friend and as a result, Hystaspas returns much-enriched from the expedition. A letter of recommendation from Cyrus the Great is, it seems, worth a great deal of money.

One further message in the *Cyropaedia*, a message which may have been oral rather than written, is worth noting because it is accompanied by non-verbal artefacts, tokens. When the beautiful captive Panthea is so favorably impressed by Cyrus that she offers to summon her husband Abradatas to defect to the Persians, she sends her σύμβολα, her tokens, along with the message. Abradatas, we are told, receives his wife's summons and recognizing Panthea's *symbola*, as well as understanding the situation, gladly sets off to join Cyrus (*Cyr.* 6.1.46). It seems that the tokens, perhaps akin to those used by Menelaus and Helen (Eur. *Hel.* 291) and the σήματα of Penelope and Odysseus (*Od.* 23.108–110), are the crucial part of Panthea's message, and these non-verbal artefacts convince Abradatas that it is indeed his wife who is summoning him.[30] While these tokens must have been accompanied by an oral message or a letter, setting forth and explaining Panthea's request that her husband change sides and join her, apparently the non-verbal element, the paraphernalia accompanying the message, outweighs all else.

Letters, then, are found in the *Cyropaedia*, but Xenophon chooses to include only one full-length verbatim letter in the work. This epistle, the longest letter to be found in Xenophon, is written by Cyrus the Great in reply to an angry message from his uncle, the Median ruler Cyaxares (*Cyr.*

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[30] See too the relay of beacons described at the opening of the *Agamemnon* which Clytemnestra interprets as a proof and token (τέκμαρ ... σύμβολόν τε, Aes. *Ag.* 315) from her husband at Troy that the war has been won, a signal apparently agreed upon between the couple in advance (see Fraenkel: ad loc.).

4.5.26–34). Xenophon invents the figure of Cyaxares so that Cyrus will not have to confront his grandfather Astyages, king of the Medes, and conquer his empire, as he does in Herodotus and Ctesias. Cyaxares of the *Cyropaedia* is the son of Astyages and he has a seemingly smooth and untroubled relationship with Cyrus, although Cyrus outshines him from his earliest youth, and gradually usurps his uncle's forces and kingdom. The letter is written after Cyaxares and Cyrus wage a successful battle together. In typical fashion, Cyaxares goes off to celebrate at a drunken party, while Cyrus pursues the retreating enemy in order to take full advantage of their victory. Cyrus receives Cyaxares' permission to borrow any Mede horsemen who are willing to join him on the expedition, and virtually the entire Mede cavalry goes with him. The next morning Cyaxares wakes up to discover that nearly all of his men have left with Cyrus and he sends an angry and threatening message to Cyrus, demanding that the Mede cavalry be returned to him at once. The anonymous messenger, we are told, is sorry that he has not joined Cyrus himself, but, accompanied by a hundred riders, he dutifully tracks down Cyrus. The messenger conveys Cyaxares' furious words to Cyrus and the Medes who are with him, ending with the king's command that the Medes return at once (*Cyr*. 4.5.18). Cyrus responds to Cyaxares' threats with a four-pronged attack. He first makes a speech to those who have heard the message, in order to reassure the Medes and downplay Cyaxares' anger, redefining it as fear.[31] He then arranges for Cyaxares' messenger to be wined and dined and otherwise distracted, in order to delay his departure. Next, he orders a trusted Persian aide to go home to Persia and request—orally—reinforcements for his army. Finally, Cyrus writes a letter to Cyaxares, a letter which the same Persian aide will deliver to Cyaxares on his way to Persia. Several of these moves are clearly influenced by Ctesias' *Persica*, for when the angry Median king of the *Persica*, Astyages, orders Cyrus to return to him, Cyrus delays the Mede messengers, plying them with food and drink, in order to have time to summon help from Persia.[32]

In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus reads his letter aloud to the messenger who is to deliver it, so that the messenger can understand and confirm the contents, and will be able to answer any questions that may arise (*Cyr*. 4.5.26; see too 34). This may have been a common practice: when Nicias sends his long letter home from Sicily, he sends along messengers as well, to answer questions and reinforce his message (Thuc. 7.10). Thucydides tells

31 Tatum 1989: 126–127.
32 *FGrH* 688 F8d. 26–27 = *FGrH* 90 F66. 26–27.

us that Nicias chose to write a letter for several reasons: he is afraid that oral messengers will be poor speakers, forgetful or more anxious to please the crowd than tell the truth (Thuc. 7.8). Cyrus, too, may have had several reasons for his choice of the letter form. He may have suspected that a messenger would be unwilling or unable to confront the angry Cyaxares who was notorious for his bad temper (*Cyr.* 4.5.9, 18–19).[33] Since he is, in fact, refusing Cyaxares' request to send back his soldiers, a short oral message to that effect would perhaps have been too blunt or provocative. Several scholars suggest that Cyrus read his letter aloud because he has a wider audience in mind, i.e. the Mede soldiers who may have been present when Cyrus gave his instructions to the messenger. Cyrus, in this view, reads out the letter in order to reassure the Medes and demonstrate that they need not worry about disobeying their king's direct command to return.[34] In effect, reading a letter aloud, particularly to someone other than the intended recipient, turns an epistle into a speech, a speech which cannot be interrupted by the addressee.

Cyrus' letter to Cyaxares opens and closes with standard epistolary formulae, beginning Κῦρος Κυαξάρῃ χαίρειν ("Cyrus to Cyaxares greetings") and ending ἔρρωσο ("Farewell"); see above, p. 86. The letter itself falls into three sections. Cyrus begins by stating that he and the Mede soldiers have not left Cyaxares alone (ἡμεῖς σε οὔτε ἔρημον κατελίπομεν, *Cyr.* 4.5.27), echoing and countering, as it were, an angry thought which Xenophon tells us Cyaxares has entertained (ἐβριμοῦτό τε τῷ Κύρῳ καὶ τοῖς Μήδοις τῷ καταλιπόντας αὐτὸν ἔρημον οἴχεσθαι, *Cyr.* 4.5.9). This is similar to the narrative technique we have seen earlier, where Pharnabazus echoes and counters the problems raised in the captured Spartan dispatch that he has not seen (above, p. 89). Cyrus makes no real attempt to mollify Cyaxares and he points out that he has protected his uncle by drawing away the enemy. In the second section of the letter (*Cyr.* 4.5.29–31), Cyrus draws a direct comparison between Cyaxares and himself, repeatedly using first and second person singular pronouns to contrast their behavior.

> σκέψαι δὲ οἵῳ ὄντι μοι περὶ σὲ οἷος ὢν περὶ ἐμὲ ἔπειτά μοι μέμφῃ. ἐγὼ μέν γέ σοι ἤγαγον συμμάχους, οὐχ ὅσους σὺ ἔπεισας, ἀλλ' ὁπόσους ἐγὼ πλείστους ἐδυνάμην· σὺ δέ μοι ἔδωκας μὲν ἐν τῇ φιλίᾳ ὄντι ὅσους πεῖσαι δυνασθείην· νῦν δ' ἐν τῇ πολεμίᾳ ὄντος οὐ τὸν θέλοντα ἀλλὰ πάντας ἀποκαλεῖς. τοιγαροῦν τότε μὲν ᾤόμην

[33] It is worth noting that Cyrus trusts this same messenger to convey a more straightforward oral request to Persia (*Cyr.* 4.5.26, 34; see too 5.5.1).

[34] See Tatum 1989: 127; Nadon 2001: 94–96, but we are not explicitly told that the Medes are there.

> ἀμφοτέροις ὑμῖν χάριν ὀφείλειν· νῦν δὲ σύ με ἀναγκάζεις σοῦ μὲν ἐπιλαθέσθαι, τοῖς δὲ ἀκολουθήσασι πειρᾶσθαι πᾶσαν τὴν χάριν ἀποδιδόναι. οὐ μέντοι ἔγωγε σοὶ ὅμοιος δύναμαι γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν πέμπων ἐπὶ στράτευμα εἰς Πέρσας ἐπιστέλλω, ὁπόσοι ἂν ἴωσιν ὡς ἐμέ, ἤν τι σὺ αὐτῶν δέῃ πρὶν ἡμᾶς ἐλθεῖν, σοὶ ὑπάρχειν, οὐχ ὅπως ἂν θέλωσιν, ἀλλ' ὅπως ἂν σὺ βούλῃ χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς.

> Consider how I have behaved towards you and you towards me, and yet you blame me for my conduct. For I have brought you allies, not as many as you persuaded, but as many as I could, while you gave me only as many allies as I could persuade, while I was in friendly territory. Now that I am in hostile territory, you are trying to recall all the men, not just those who wish to return. Then, I thought I owed a favor both to you and your men, but now you are compelling me to ignore you and to devote all my gratitude to those who have followed me. Nonetheless I am unable to behave as you do, and I am now sending to Persia for additional forces. Whoever comes to me will be at your service if you need them for anything before we arrive—not to serve as they choose, but as you wish to use them.

Here Cyrus' tone is more personal, and expresses his angry feelings towards Cyaxares. His repeated use of personal pronouns stresses the difference in their respective behavior and the lack of reciprocity in their relationship. Artemon, the editor of Aristotle's letters, famously described letters as one of the two sides of a dialogue (εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἷον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου, Demetrius *de eloc.* 223) and here we hear Cyrus' side of the story, his view of his relationship with his uncle. Cyrus presents his 'half of a dialogue' in this letter; he will subsequently work out his differences with his uncle in person, by means of an actual dialogue, a Socratic-style cross-examination, where the two jointly investigate the question of whether Cyrus has hurt Cyaxares in any way.[35] The use of a series of personal pronouns to contrast the very different behavior of the writer of a letter and his addressee is also found in the sole surviving letter by Ctesias, a suicide note written by the Mede Stryangaeus. He writes to the Sacian queen Zaarinaea who rejects him, "I saved you and you were saved by me, but because of you I am destroyed" (ἐγὼ μὲν σὲ ἔσωσα, καὶ σὺ δι' ἐμὲ ἐσώθης, ἐγὼ δὲ διὰ σὲ ἀπωλόμην F8b). We can also compare Tomyris' hissing oral reproach to the dead Cyrus in Herodotus, another one-sided dialogue with many first and second person pronouns: "You destroyed me, while I lived and conquered you in battle, by capturing my son by treachery. So I, just as I threatened, will give you your fill of blood." (Σὺ μὲν ἐμὲ ζώουσάν τε καὶ νικῶσάν σε μάχῃ ἀπώλεσας παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν ἑλὼν δόλῳ· σὲ δ' ἐγώ, κατά περ ἠπείλησα, αἵματος κορέσω. Hdt. 1. 214).[36]

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[35] *Cyr.* 5.5.5–37; see Gera 1993: 98–109.

[36] Contrast the use of personal pronouns in Harpagus' letter in Herodotus (1.124) which

In the final section of his letter (*Cyr.* 4.5.32–33), Cyrus virtually threatens his uncle, under the guise of offering him sage advice, saying:

> Although I am younger than you, I will give you some advice. Do not take back anything that you have given, so that you will not incur hatred instead of gratitude. You should not use threats when you want someone to come to you quickly nor should you threaten large numbers of people while stating that you have been left on your own, for you will teach them to pay you no notice.

While Cyrus claims simply to be offering useful advice, e.g. in the spirit of Amasis advising his friend Polycrates by letter in Herodotus (3.40), his words are quite harsh. We find hostile letters and messages exchanged between enemies in both Herodotus and Ctesias, and our letter seems to belong to this tradition as well, even though Cyaxares and Cyrus are relatives and officially allies. Herodotus' Astyages and Cyrus exchange brief messages before they go to battle (Hdt. 1.127–128), and Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae sends messages to Cyrus before each of their two confrontations. As we have seen, she addresses the dead Cyrus as well (1.206, 212, 214). Darius and his enemy, the Scythian king, also exchange messages in Herodotus (4.126–127), and Darius later receives symbolic gifts meant as a warning, before a battle that never actually takes place (4.131–132). Ctesias, too, includes several such hostile letters between warring enemies. The Indian king sends Semiramis a threatening letter before she launches her attack upon him, and according to the summary provided by Diodorus of Sicily (2.18. 1–2 = *FGrH* 688 F1b), the king is quite enraged. He accuses Semiramis of aggressively going to war without having been harmed in any way, curses her, and calls her a "strumpet" (as the Loeb edition translates ὡς ἑταίρας βλασφημήσας). The king also calls upon the gods, and threatens to crucify Semiramis, once he captures her. Semiramis laughingly dismisses his vitriolic words and calls for deeds instead. This is simply Diodorus' summary of the letters: the original epistle may have been quite lengthy, for Ctesias was not known for his brevity. Photius summarises the later sections of Ctesias' *Persica* and he tells us that Darius and the Scythian king exchange nasty letters before they go to war, trading insults, but does not go into the details (*FGrH* 688 F13. 20). Ctesias had a third pre-war exchange between enemies, where we find Astyages threatening Cyrus before their clash, by means of messengers

points to the reciprocal charis-relationships between the characters; see too Themistocles' letter to Xerxes (Thuc. 1.137.4).

(*FGrH* 688 F8d. 33 = *FGrH* 90 F66.33). Such angry written exchanges between enemies are found in later writers as well.[37]

The single long letter of the *Cyropaedia* incorporates, then, several different literary traditions. It is at one and the same time a personal reproach to a relative, a letter of advice, and an angry exchange with an enemy. In addition, by having Cyrus read the letter aloud, Xenophon lends the letter the air of a speech, allowing Cyrus to lecture his uncle from afar, while publicizing his reply to those who surround him. In this fictional letter, Xenophon utilizes the epistle form to the full.

What of letters written by Xenophon himself? We know that Ctesias, a slightly older contemporary of Xenophon, made frequent use of letters, with political and diplomatic letters flying thick and fast between Artaxerxes, Evagoras, Conon, and Ctesias. Ctesias is even said to have added a forged postscript to a letter in order to arrange his own release from the court of Artaxerxes (*FGrH* 688F30, F32). A collection of letters, some of them possibly authentic, is attributed to another contemporary of Xenophon, Plato.[38] Xenophon, exiled from Athens and with a wide circle of acquaintances in the Greek world, must have written a great many letters over the years. We can well imagine that his own letters ranged over every possible topic: letters to family and friends, business letters, diplomatic letters, letters of recommendation, and perhaps more philosophical epistles as well.

It is very likely that Xenophon's personal letters were, on the whole, straightforward documents, which were delivered by ordinary couriers and reached their intended recipients, but this is not true of many of the letters which are embedded in his historical and fictional narratives. In his writings, Xenophon makes it plain that letters were widely used, but he also indicates that this mode of communication could be complex and hazardous. Often, letters are far more than the text they include, and even the texts themselves can be falsified or manipulated. The letters Xenophon highlights sometimes convey their message through the circumstances of their transmission, the external embellishments of the physical letter, and the accompanying courier, in addition to the actual words they contain. Epistles in Xenophon's narratives range from ordinary, everyday messages to layered communications whose non-verbal elements and attending circumstances are no less important than their actual text.

[37] Compare the hostile letters exchanged between Alexander and Darius in the Alexander Briefroman; see Tim Whitmarsh, this volume.

[38] See Morrison in this volume.

PART I

EPISTOLARY FORMS: LETTERS IN NARRATIVE, LETTERS AS NARRATIVE

B. *Correspondences of Historical Figures: Authentic and Pseudonymous*

NARRATIVE AND EPISTOLARITY IN THE 'PLATONIC' EPISTLES*

A.D. Morrison

I. Narrative, Epistolarity and Authenticity

> The play of personality and the marvellous timeliness of the letter in each detail are such that no writer of fiction, however versed in psychology, has ever equalled the impression of reality that they produce. The writer of the Platonic Epistles must have been the greatest historical novelist that ever lived, and that while unknown to fame, or else no other than Plato.
>
> (Post 1925: 61)

Levi Post's reaction to the seventh of the so-called 'Platonic' *Epistles* well illustrates some of the most common critical reflexes when reading these letters, in particular the relationship between their impressive 'detail' and 'accuracy' and the possibility of their authenticity. It is the question of authenticity which has dominated scholarly attention, for understandable reasons: the *Epistles* seem to some to offer the tantalising possibility that here we can read in them the 'real', unmediated voice of Plato the man and/or the philosopher, absent from the dialogues, which are frustratingly (for some) *not* structured as treatises 'by' Plato. Scholarship on the 'Platonic' *Epistles* has been dominated by the search for genuine Platonic material among the collection, because of the natural desire to know more about Plato himself, the Academy, and the development of his thought.[1] But the

* Audiences in Lampeter and Dublin heard earlier versions of this paper: I am grateful to them for many useful comments as I am to the editors and Ruth Morello, who greatly improved this piece. Note that for the *Epistles* I have heavily adapted the translation by Morrow 1962. Other translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. For quotations from the Greek I have used Burnet's OCT except where noted.

[1] See Wohl 1998: 87 n. 1 and Isnardi Parente-Ciani 2002: xi–xv (with further bibliography) for the long debate about the authenticity of the *Epistles*, which we even find in our MSS: cf. ἀντιλέγεται ὡς οὐ Πλάτωνος ("it is contended that it is not Plato's", 359e) at the end of *Epistle* 12. For a recent survey of scholars' views about the authenticity of *Epistle* 7 in particular, see Huffmann 2005: 42–43. The issue of authenticity, although with specific reference to the letter

debate about authenticity has meant a corresponding lack of attention to their character as epistles (their 'letteriness') and to the ways in which the collection tells its various stories.

I propose here, therefore, entirely to ignore and suspend judgement about the question of whether a particular letter is by (the historical) Plato, and instead to take the collection seriously as a collection of letters written by the character 'Plato' (though of course (as we shall see) this character exploits important elements of the life and work of his namesake). But the quotation above also usefully illustrates another relevant critical approach to the 'Platonic' *Epistles*, the model of the historical *novel*. Post introduces this as the (rejected) alternative to authorship by the historical Plato, but the idea that the 'Platonic' *Epistles* form a kind of epistolary novel or *Briefroman* is an important one for those scholars who have focused more attention on the collection as a work of prose literature rather than as a source (whether genuine or not) for the historical Plato's life.[2] This approach has many benefits, not least taking the collection seriously as a narrative told in letters. But it too has its limitations. In particular the parallel of the chronologically ordered early modern epistolary novel along the lines of Richardson's *Pamela* or Laclos' *Les liaisons dangeureuses* is a problematic frame of reference for ancient letter-collections such as the 'Platonic' *Epistles*, which are arranged on very different lines and relate their narratives in very different ways.[3] The following table gives some idea of the apparently much more disordered character of the 'Platonic' *Epistles*, at least when compared with modern epistolary novels such as *Pamela*:[4]

collection attributed to Epicurus and the Epicureans, is also addressed by Gordon in this volume (pp. 134–144).

2 See e.g. Holzberg 1994: 8–13 for the *Epistles* as a *Briefroman*. Scholars who have been inclined to accept the authenticity of some or all of the letters have accordingly been concerned to demonstrate that the *Epistles* are *not* a *Briefroman* (e.g. Harward 1932: 64–65). See also Post 1925. Later in this volume, Poltera discusses the *Letters of Euripides* and Whitmarsh discusses the *Alexander Romance* similarly in the framework of a *Briefroman*; Poltera's chapter also discusses the letters attributed to Plato (pp. 157–165).

3 Something similar is true, I think, of Penwill 1978 approach to the *Letters of Themistocles*, where he outlines the problems with assimilating that collection to modern epistolary novels of the *Pamela*-type, and then finds a 'diptych' structure consisting of two *Pamela*-like epistolary novels juxtaposed and forming an overarching epistolary novel. But this diptych is very different in structure and nature from *Pamela*.

4 On the chronological ordering of *Pamela* and similar epistolary novels see Altman 1982: 170–171 who comments on the "journalistic sequence" of letters in novels of the *Pamela*-type in an important discussion of the different types of continuity and discontinuity in modern epistolary narratives.

Table 1: dramatic dates of 'Platonic' *Epistles*.

1. 361
2. 360[5]
3. after 361
4. 357–354
5. 364?
6. c. 350?
7. 354
8. 353
9. before 367?
10. 357–354
11. ?
12. ?
13. 366

Some critics have read this arrangement as chaotic: 'the Epistles do not seem to be arranged on any intelligible principle',[6] and modern re-arrangements are accordingly common. It is particularly telling that Post's re-ordering, for example, 'restores' the letters to their chronological order, and thus begins with the last letter in the collection, *Epistle* 13.[7] But such chronological re-ordering is to privilege the modern epistolary novel as the ideal arrangement for an epistolary narrative and obscures or destroys many important aspects of the collection, as we shall see.

The 'Platonic' *Epistles* thus deserve our attention in a volume on epistolary narrative in part because they form a good example of the limitations of the parallel of the modern *Briefroman*. They form, in fact, a telling illustration of the different ways in which ancient collections of letters can construct (or frustrate) different kinds of narrative. They are also clearly influential on later letter-collections (e.g. Chion of Heraclea) in a number of ways,[8] and form an important example of a species of ancient narrative autobiography, although again here it is important to try to limit one's assumptions about what such autobiography should look like.[9] My study attempts to

[5] See below for discussion of the dramatic date of *Epistle* 2.

[6] Bury 1929: 385 (the introduction to his Loeb translation).

[7] Post 1925, who is bolder than many on the question of their dramatic date, orders them thus: 13, 2, 11, 10, 4, 3, 7, 8, 6, rejecting 1, 5, 9 and 12 as spurious.

[8] Cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 202.

[9] See Most 1989: 121–125 for an arresting challenge to the notion that we should view first-person narratives in Greek in general as 'autobiographical', because of the particular

establish the narrative and epistolary patterns which we can find in the collection, so that we can understand more fully the collection as it stands, and also the ways in which its creation and manipulation of narrative patterns provide a model for other narrative epistolary collections.[10]

So, what does the collection look like (and when did it take this shape)? There are thirteen letters, all written by 'Plato' to a variety of addressees (more of which later), as follows:

Table 2: addressees of the 'Platonic' *Epistles*.

1. Dionysius II
2. Dionysius II
3. Dionysius II
4. Dion
5. Perdiccas
6. Hermias, Erastus, Coriscus
7. friends of Dion
8. friends of Dion
9. Archytas of Tarentum
10. Aristodorus
11. Laodamas
12. Archytas of Tarentum
13. Dionysius II

They also vary wildly in length, with eight short letters (1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12), four medium-sized ones (2, 3, 8, 13) and one very long letter, the famous *Seventh Letter*. This weighs in at well over 30 pages in the OCT, and is as long as all the other letters put together. One can gain some idea of the impressive scale of the *Seventh Letter* from the fact that it is almost twice as long as Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus* as preserved in Diogenes Laertius. It is also placed exactly in the middle of the collection, with 6 (much shorter) letters on either side, which is very clear in Table 3:

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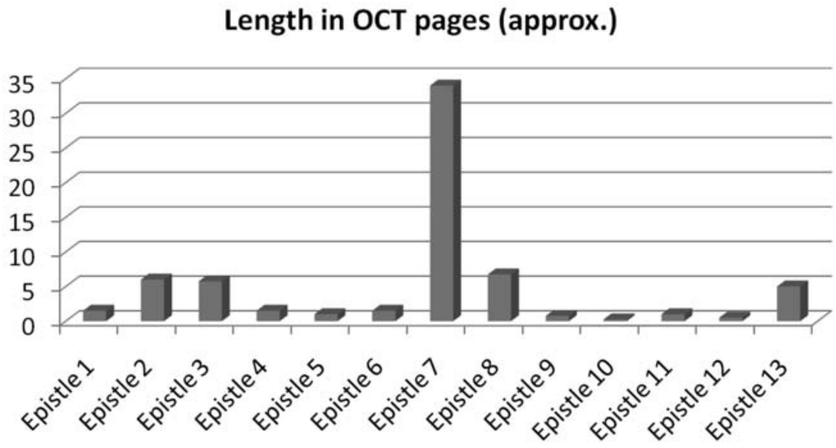
character of autobiography as type of discourse (specifically its focus on an individual and its direction at an audience of 'strangers'). Epistolary collections such as the 'Platonic' *Epistles*, however, do deserve consideration as a type of autobiography even on this definition.

[10] The principles of organisation and ordering in ancient letter-collections which are not fictional are rather different from those in fictional letter-collections such as the 'Platonic' *Epistles*: see Gibson 2012 for an examination of these principles; see also the Introduction to this volume (pp. 24–25) and Kasprzyk (pp. 264–271).



This structure is itself sometimes cited as evidence of deliberate design by the editor/collector of the *Epistles*,[11] and though it is certainly suggestive there are yet more compelling reasons to see a carefully designed structure in the collection.

When did the collection take this shape? The primary order of the *Epistles* in our MSS is the order 1–13 of our modern texts,[12] and it seems likely that this order was the ancient one also, since Diogenes Laertius (3.61) tells us that there were thirteen letters in Thrasyllus' edition of Plato, and gives a list of addressees which corresponds to ours:[13]

> Ἐπιστολαὶ τρεισκαίδεκα, ἠθικαί—ἐν αἷς ἔγραφεν εὖ πράττειν, Ἐπίκουρος δὲ εὖ διάγειν, Κλέων χαίρειν—**πρὸς Ἀριστόδωρον μία, πρὸς Ἀρχύταν δύο, πρὸς Διονύσιον τέτταρες, πρὸς Ἑρμίαν καὶ Ἔραστον καὶ Κορίσκον μία, πρὸς Λεωδάμαντα μία, πρὸς Δίωνα μία, πρὸς Περδίκκαν μία, πρὸς τοὺς Δίωνος οἰκείους δύο.** καὶ οὗτος μὲν οὕτω διαιρεῖ καί τινες.
>
> ... the *Epistles*, thirteen in number, which are ethical. In these epistles his heading was 'Welfare', as that of Epicurus was 'A Good Life', and that of Cleon 'All Joy'. They comprise: *one to Aristodorus, two to Archytas, four to Dionysius,*

11 E.g. by Holzberg 1994: 13.

12 There are some variations on this order occasionally to be found, but for the most part these reflect the primary order (such as the selection 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, prefaced by short extracts from 2 which several MSS display, see Moore-Blunt 1985: xiv). The selections and variations in order are important, because the editorial choices involved in selection and ordering reveal much about the structure and function of letter-collections at the time the choices were made, but they lie outside the scope of this paper.

13 In fact the MSS of D.L. have "Aristodemus" for "Aristodorus", but Long makes the obvious correction (supplying the name from *Epistle* 10) in the OCT.

> *one to Hermias, Erastus and Coriscus, one each to Laodamas, Dion and Perdiccas, and two to Dion's friends*. This is the division adopted by Thrasyllus and some others. (trans. Hicks, adapted)

This strongly suggests that our collection had taken shape by the early first century AD (it may be, of course, that it was Thrasyllus himself who gave it this shape),[14] if this Thrasyllus should be identified (as seems likely) with the astrologer at the court of Tiberius.[15] Niklas Holzberg has also suggested that the collection may be older still—Diogenes Laertius mentions the arrangement of Plato's works by the third/second-century BC scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium which included Ἐπιστολαί.[16]

What, then, did the editor/collector (whoever he was) think he was doing when he put the letters in *this* order? What narrative(s) was he trying to construct or imply about Plato or the other characters who feature in the *Epistles*? Mary Beard has drawn our attention to the editor's inevitable involvement in creating a particular impression of a letter-writer through arranging the letters in a particular order,[17] and it is worth remembering in this connection that principal structure of ancient books of poetry and prose is usually linear. This is in part determined by the physical experience of reading an ancient book-roll, with only a small part of the roll visible at any one time, and it being awkward to refer quickly back to an earlier part (or 'fast-forward' to a later section).[18] This is not to say (of course) that such books could not be structured in other ways, but we should look first at the linear, sequential arrangement within such books to see if it is significant for the reader.

It is also worth bearing in mind that this very linear structure or arrangement can suggest particular connections between letters and even wider 'quasi-narratives' which may differ from the chronologically ordered 'story' (*histoire, fabula*) which a narratologist might reconstruct from the collection. I am thinking of such things as the "illusion of temporal sequence"

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14 It is Thrasyllus to whom the arrangement of Plato's works into 'tetralogies' is attributed at D.L. 3.58–61, which arrangement is usually reflected (to varying degrees) in our MSS of Plato. For a rather speculative treatment of Thrasyllus' work on the text of Plato and its continuing influence see in general Tarrant 1993.

15 For this identification see schol. *ad* Juv. 7.576, Tarrant 1993: 7–11.

16 Holzberg 1994: 8.

17 "No editor is ideologically neutral; every edition is founded on a series of *choices* (omissions, juxtapositions, emendations and excerptions) that combine to offer a loaded *representation* of the letter-writer and the relationships instantiated in the letters." (Beard 2002: 120).

18 See in general Van Sickle 1980.

which has been seen in Horace's first book of *Epistles*,[19] such as the 'turn' from poetry to ethics in 1 followed by writing about ethics to a friend in 2, and so on. I have also argued elsewhere that we can read in his *Epistles* an implied narrative about Horace's philosophical development (and its interruptions) which is supported by the sequence of letters rather than their relative 'dramatic' chronology.[20]

The significant ordering and juxtaposing of letters within a letter-collection obviously keeps the reader involved in the construction of its various narratives ('chronological' story alongside other 'implied' or 'quasi'-narratives), in part because of the 'piecemeal' nature of a letter-collection—each letter reveals a little bit more about a character, or a relationship, or a series of events:[21]

> Part of the epistolary game is to create a situation which demands the active participation of the reader. Each letter gives the reader a little more information to work with, until we finally convince ourselves that we have reconstructed a reasonable facsimile of 'what really happened.' The procedure, however, is neither wholly linear (past to present) nor a flashback (present to past), nor entirely consistent in its details.[22]

But the particular character of epistolary narratives (as Rosenmeyer suggests here) means that we need to approach them in different ways from the more straightforward narratives of epic, historiography or the novel. A narrative in letters, without the presence of an editorial frame, is perhaps most akin to hearing a series of speeches by (some of) the characters in a drama, but without the context of fully-heard dialogue and exchange, and without the guarantee of the chronological ordering of conventional drama. Reading an epistolary collection resembles, then, hearing isolated speeches, not necessarily in the 'right' (chronological) order, not necessarily bearing directly on the same events, and often giving us access only to one of the protagonists in the 'drama'. And the *order* in which we hear these 'speeches' is an important part of the view we as readers form of the collection as a whole and the characters within it.

In the 'Platonic' *Epistles* in particular it is in the use of order and juxtaposition of the letters where we see the starkest differences between ancient and modern epistolary narratives, and the arrangement of the collection

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19 See de Pretis 2004: 141–144.

20 See Morrison 2007: 125–129.

21 This is certainly at work in Plato's *Epistles*–Niklas Holzberg 1994: 10 has identified this process of "gradual revelation" as one of the narrative strategies of the collection.

22 Rosenmeyer 2001: 230.

highlights several important aspects of the characters in the narrative and the central role played in the story by epistolary communication itself.

II. Beginnings and Endings: *Epistles* 1–8

Let us have a look at Plato's *Epistles* in detail and in sequence. We begin with a short letter from Plato to Dionysius II, hence introducing two of the main characters in the collection as a whole. Right at the start we meet Plato's typical epistolary opening: Πλάτων Διονυσίῳ εὖ πράττειν ("Plato to Dionysius, welfare", 309a). This is way Plato begins his letters according to Diogenes Laertius (3.61, quoted above), differing from the standard Greek epistolary opening with χαίρειν ("joy").[23] The Plato of this first epistle has been more involved in the administration of the Syracusan state (αὐτοκράτωρ δὲ πολλάκις τὴν ὑμετέραν πόλιν διαφυλάξας, ἀπεπέμφθην ἀτιμότερον ἢ πτωχὸν ὑμῶν ἀποστελλόντων προσήκει καὶ κελευόντων ἐκπλεῦσαι, τοσοῦτον παρ' ὑμῖν διατρίψαντα χρόνον, "And though governing with full powers I have protected your city several times, you have sent me away with less consideration than ought to be shown in sending away and ordering off a beggar who had spent the same amount of time with you", 309b2–6) than the subsequent letters suggest,[24] but Dionysius II has sent him away—this is his indignant response. The dramatic date seems then to be 361 or 360, after Plato's second visit to the court of Dionysius II in 361,[25] though the account of Plato's departure which we read in *Epistle* 7 will turn out to be very different. *Epistle* 1 also warns Dionysius II of the dangers of being a tyrant and the likely violent end to his rule, thus anticipating later developments in the collection:[26]

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[23] See Trapp 2003: 34–35 on epistolary formulae in Greek.

[24] This in itself has given rise to the suggestion (originally by Ficinus) that the writer of this letter is Dion rather than Plato (see also Isnardi Parente-Ciani 2002: xxxi–xxxii). But it is clear that the editor/collector of the *Epistles* (perhaps Thrasyllus) thought it was by Plato, and hence placed it first in the collection (Isnardi Parente-Ciani 2002: xxxii). Note also the reference to "your city" in 309b3 which characterises the writer as not a Syracusan. Readers of epistolary collections are also more tolerant of inconsistency across a collection than in other forms of narrative/collection, because the letters they contain may have been written at very different times, or with radically different purposes according to their addressees. Hence readers can tolerate a greater level of discrepancy in such things as names, dates, factual details. This in itself may be one of those attractions of the form. See Rosenmeyer 2001: 232–233 on incompatibility within the *Letters of Themistocles*.

[25] He had earlier visited Dionysius II in 367 (see *Epistle* 3), and earlier still visited the court of his father Dionysius I.

[26] See Holzberg 1994: 11.

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ βουλεύσομαι τὸ λοιπὸν τρόπον ἀπανθρωπότερον, σὺ δὲ **τοιοῦτος ὢν τύραννος οἰκήσεις μόνος.**

I shall therefore in the future consult my own interests in a more misanthropic manner, and you, *being a tyrant, will live alone.* (309b6–8)

ὑπομνῆσαι δέ σε βούλομαι διότι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τραγῳδοποιῶν οἱ πλεῖστοι, ὅταν ὑπό τινος **ἀποθνῄσκοντα τύραννον** εἰσάγωσιν, ἀναβοῶντα ποιοῦσιν—
φίλων ἔρημος, ὦ τάλας, ἀπόλλυμαι·

I wish to remind you that the majority of other tragedians, when they bring on *a tyrant who is being killed by someone*, make him cry out: "Bereft of friends, o wretch that I am, I die". (309d5–310a1)

This theme of 'relations with a tyrant/ruler' is prominent through the collection, and is a featured shared with other epistolary collections (e.g. Chion of Heraclea).[27]

The brevity of *Epistle* 1, its explicit reference to its 'bearer', one Baccheius (309c1–2), and its epistolary close (ἔρρωσο, "be strong", 310b1) establish the epistolary nature of the collection as well as introducing some important elements which are later developed.[28] More work in establishing the genre and principal subject-matter of the collection is done by *Epistle* 2, with its explicit statement about the affinity of wisdom and power and the subsequent catalogue of rulers and wise men:

πέφυκε συνιέναι εἰς ταὐτὸν φρόνησίς τε καὶ δύναμις μεγάλη, καὶ ταῦτ' ἄλληλα ἀεὶ διώκει καὶ ζητεῖ καὶ συγγίγνεται· ἔπειτα καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι χαίρουσιν περὶ τούτων αὐτοί τε διαλεγόμενοι καὶ ἄλλων ἀκούοντες ἔν τε ἰδίαις συνουσίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ποιήσεσιν. οἷον καὶ περὶ Ἱέρωνος ὅταν διαλέγωνται ἄνθρωποι καὶ Παυσανίου τοῦ Λακεδαιμονίου, χαίρουσι τὴν Σιμωνίδου συνουσίαν παραφέροντες, ἅ τε ἔπραξεν καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· καὶ Περίανδρον τὸν Κορίνθιον καὶ Θαλῆν τὸν Μιλήσιον ὑμνεῖν εἰώθασιν ἅμα, καὶ Περικλέα καὶ Ἀναξαγόραν, καὶ Κροῖσον αὖ καὶ Σόλωνα ὡς σοφοὺς καὶ Κῦρον ὡς δυνάστην. καὶ δὴ ταῦτα μιμούμενοι οἱ ποιηταὶ Κρέοντα μὲν καὶ Τειρεσίαν συνάγουσιν, Πολύειδον δὲ καὶ Μίνω, Ἀγαμέμνονα δὲ καὶ Νέστορα καὶ Ὀδυσσέα καὶ Παλαμήδη—ὡς δ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, καὶ Προμηθέα Διὶ ταύτῃ πῃ συνῆγον οἱ πρῶτοι ἄνθρωποι …

It is natural that wisdom and great power come together; they are always pursuing and searching after and coming together with one another. And then men delight in conversing themselves about them, and in listening to what others say, in their own conversations and in poetry. For example,

27 See Holzberg 1996: 650, Rosenmeyer 2001: 202–204. For a parallel discussion of Euripides' letters to King Archelaos, and his treatment of the theme of 'relations with a tyrant/ruler', see Poltera in this volume (pp. 154–161).

28 ἔρρωσο is a standard closing formula in Greek letters, see Trapp 2003: 35.

> when men talk of Hiero and Pausanias the Lacedaemonian, they like to recall Simonides' connection with them and what he said and did. Likewise they usually celebrate together Periander of Corinth and Thales of Miletus, Pericles and Anaxagoras, and again Croesus and Solon, as wise men, with Cyrus, as a ruler. In imitation of those examples, the poets couple Creon and Tiresias, Polyeidus and Minos, Agamemnon and Nestor, Odysseus and Palamedes. And the first men, it seems to me, linked Prometheus with Zeus in much the same manner ... (310e5–311b4)

More importantly, perhaps, *Epistle* 2 suggests that relations have improved between Plato and Dionysius II, to the extent that they can exchange letters and discuss philosophical problems,[29] as well as recommend friends or request their return (Plato has sent Polyxenus to Dionysius II, 314c7–d7; he requests Philistion for Speusippus, 314e1–4; and recommends/praises Lysiclides, 315a2–5). This has suggested to some critics that this letter comes from an *earlier* stage in the relationship between Plato and Dionysius II, before the break depicted in *Epistle* 1, but its position in the sequence suggests (at least) a break followed by the 'repair' of the relationship. This might be an example of a 'quasi'-narrative (which might have been contradicted by a firm chronological detail placing the dramatic date *Epistle* 2 earlier than *Epistle* 1), but in fact *Epistle* 2 reveals just enough of the background to allow the reader to confirm that *Epistle* 2 follows *Epistle* 1 chronologically, and hence that the reconciliation is an element of the narratological 'story' (it 'really happened' within the world of the *Epistles*).[30] In particular, the letter begins with Plato's response to Dionysius' apparent wish that Plato and his friends keep quiet about him (310b4–6) and contains Plato's denial that Dionysius was being slandered at Olympia by Plato's friends:

> καὶ ταῦτα λέγω ὡς οὐχ ὑγιές τι Κρατιστόλου καὶ Πολυξένου πρὸς σὲ εἰρηκότων, ὧν φασὶ λέγειν τὸν ἕτερον **ὅτι ἀκούοι Ὀλυμπίασι πολλῶν τινων τῶν μετ' ἐμοῦ σε κακηγορούντων.** ἴσως γὰρ ὀξύτερον ἐμοῦ ἀκούει· ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἤκουσα.
>
> I say these things since there is no truth in the reports of Cratistolus and Polyxenus, one of whom told you, I hear, that *while at Olympia he heard many of my companions slander you.* Perhaps he has sharper hearing than I, since I did not hear this. (310c6–d3)

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[29] E.g. at 312d2–5: Τὸ δὲ σφαιρίον οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἔχει· δηλώσει δέ σοι Ἀρχέδημος, ἐπειδὰν ἔλθῃ. καὶ δὴ καὶ περὶ τοῦδε, ὃ δὴ τούτου τιμιώτερόν τ' ἐστὶν καὶ θειότερον, καὶ μάλα σφόδρ' αὐτῷ δηλωτέον, ὑπὲρ οὗ σὺ πέπομφας ἀπορούμενος ("The sphere is not correct. Archedemus will make it clear to you when he comes. And on that other matter which is more important and more sublime than that, about which you were in difficulties and sent queries, let him by all means make it clear to you"). Cf. also Archedemus as a philosophical intermediary in 313d4–e2.

[30] See Chatman 1978: 19–22 for an introduction to, and short history of, narratological terms such as 'story' (the events and characters in narrative, as distinct from how it is told).

This seems to be, as Holzberg has suggested,[31] the same Olympic festival at which Plato met Dion in 360, *following* his final departure from Dionysius' court (about which we heard in *Epistle* 1). We hear about the meeting at Olympia in detail in *Epistle* 7 (350b6–d4), and it is there that the plot to overthrow Dionysius is hatched, though Plato will have no part in it.

This 'repair' in the relationship in *Epistle* 2 has clearly been effected through letters, which also introduces the important motif of the 'power of letters' in this collection:

> τούτων δὴ γεγονότων καὶ ἐχόντων οὕτω, σχεδὸν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν **ηὑρήκαμεν ὃ σὺ ἐπέστειλας, ὅπως δεῖ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἡμᾶς ἔχειν**.
>
> Considering thus our situations past and present, I think we can probably say *we have found the answer to the question in your letter about our relations with one another.* (313c5–7)

Moreover, the language used in *Epistle* 2 of the relationship clearly implies it has undergone some stress after Dionysius II sent Plato away:[32]

> καὶ οἱ ἐπὶ τούτοις βοῶντες πολλοὶ ἦσαν, λέγοντες ὡς σὺ ἐμοῦ μὲν καταπεφρόνηκας, ἄλλα δ' ἐσπούδακας. ταῦτα δὴ διαβεβόηται. ὃ δὴ μετὰ ταῦτα δίκαιόν ἐστι ποιεῖν, ἄκουε, ἵνα σοι καὶ ἀποκρίνωμαι ὃ σὺ ἐρωτᾷς, πῶς χρὴ ἔχειν ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ πρὸς ἀλλήλους.
>
> Many people therefore loudly proclaimed that you held me in contempt and were focused on other matters. This, as you know, was the general account. Listen now to what in consequence you should do, and this will answer your question about how you and I should behave towards one another. (312a6–b4)

Epistle 2 presents us on the one hand with a Plato hopeful that his relationship with Dionysius II can be salvaged, and there remains a belief that letters can help to achieve this (more of the 'power of letters'). When Plato has characterised the rumour about Dionysius being slandered at Olympia, he instructs the tyrant in future, when he hears of similar rumours, to write to Plato to ask him the situation—Plato will respond with the truth:

> χρὴ δέ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, οὑτωσί σε ποιεῖν τοῦ λοιποῦ, ὅταν τι τοιοῦτον λέγῃ τις περὶ ἡμῶν τινος, **γράμματα πέμψαντα ἐμὲ ἐρέσθαι**· ἐγὼ γὰρ τἀληθῆ λέγειν οὔτε ὀκνήσω οὔτε αἰσχυνοῦμαι.
>
> But this is what you must do, I think, in the future: whenever you hear someone say anything like this about us, *send me a letter and ask me*, and I will tell you the truth without shame or hesitation. (310d3–6)

[31] See Holzberg 1994: 10.
[32] Cf. also 311d6–8.

He also hopes in *Epistle* 2 that the tyrant might still make philosophical progress (e.g. at 312d2–5),[33] but it also contains signs of what is to befall Dionysius through Dion, and also a clear indication of why Dionysius will fail in his philosophical studies, his arrogant claims already to have understood the most difficult philosophical truths:

> σὺ δὲ τοῦτο πρὸς ἐμὲ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ ὑπὸ ταῖς δάφναις αὐτὸς ἔφησθα ἐννενοηκέναι καὶ εἶναι σὸν εὕρημα· καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον ὅτι τοῦτο εἰ φαίνοιτό σοι οὕτως ἔχειν, πολλῶν ἂν εἴης λόγων ἐμὲ ἀπολελυκώς. οὐ μὴν ἄλλῳ γέ ποτ' ἔφην ἐντετυχηκέναι τοῦθ' ηὑρηκότι, ἀλλὰ ἡ πολλή μοι πραγματεία περὶ τοῦτ' εἴη·
>
> You yourself once told me, under the laurel trees in your garden, that you understood this matter, and that it was your own discovery. I replied that if you thought so, you had spared me many words. But I said that I had never come across anyone who had discovered this, and that the majority of my own effort was directed at it. (313a6–b4)

In the next epistle (3) we hear more about the background of Plato's visits to the court of Dionysius II, both the first (in 367) which was quickly followed by the banishment of Dion (316c3–317a5) and the second in 361, which involved Dionysius' flagrant refusals to grant any of Plato's requests with regard to Dion's property, which he eventually sold without his consent (317a5–319c6). This information comes to us in the form of a response by Plato to more allegations by Dionysius (315c8–e1), and this apologetic character is a regular narrative strategy in the *Epistles*, one which allows for the filling in of narrative background which might be otherwise thought to be 'common ground' between the correspondents (cf. οἶσθα γὰρ δὴ σὺ πάντα τἀντεῦθεν ἤδη γενόμενα, "you know, of course, everything that happened from then on", 317e1–2), but which needs to be gone over to correct errors and misapprehensions, thus allowing the reader to learn of important narrative details. Again this is pursued on a larger scale in *Epistle* 7 (with which *Epistle* 3 substantially overlaps, cf. 348b–349c). It also marks a clear deterioration in the relationship between Plato and Dionysius II, as well as hinting at the dangers which Dion presents to Dionysius II's tyrannical rule. The opening of the letter, which riffs on the typical Platonic epistolary opening εὖ πράττειν, objects to the manner in which Dionysius II apparently addressed the god at Delphi (χαῖρε καὶ ἡδόμενον βίοτον διάσῳζε τυράννου, "Joy to you! May you preserve the pleasant life of the tyrant", 315b6) describing it as "fawning" (θωπεύσας, 315b5) and inappropriate both for god and man. 'Take it or leave it', Plato adds to this opening (καὶ ταῦτα μὲν οὕτως εἰρήσθω παρ' ἐμοῦ περὶ τῆς

[33] See n. 29.

προσρήσεως· σὺ δ' ἀναγνοὺς αὐτά, ὅπῃ βούλει δέξασθαι, ταύτῃ δέχου, "That's enough from me on salutations; read it and take it however you please", 315c5–7), and signs off with another injunction, that if Dionysius II admits making the accusations to which Plato is responding, he should follow the example of Stesichorus and abandon lies for truth:[34]

> εἰ δ' ὁμολογεῖς, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἡγησάμενος εἶναι σοφὸν τὸν Στησίχορον, τὴν παλινῳδίαν αὐτοῦ μιμησάμενος, ἐκ τοῦ ψεύδους εἰς τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον μεταστήσῃ.
>
> But if you agree that you said these things, and on top of this judge Stesichorus wise, imitate his recantation, and change your lies to truth. (319e2–5)

The situation has moved on significantly in the next epistle (4), the only one addressed to Dion. It has a dramatic date sometime between 357 and 354: Dion has overthrown Dionysius II and is in control of Syracuse. But we only learn about this very obliquely in a passing reference to "Dionysius being out of the way" (ἀναιρεθέντος Διονυσίου, 320e1–2). *Epistle* 4 is admonitory in tone—Dion's mission is not yet complete (320a3), and the biggest test is to come (τὰ μὲν οὖν εἰς τὸ παρόν, σὺν θεῷ εἰπεῖν, ἔχει καλῶς, τὰ δὲ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων ὁ μέγιστός ἐστιν ἀγών, "All has gone well so far, thank God, but the greatest struggle is yet to come", 320b3–4). Plato hopes that strife with other leading figures in the revolution and the ambition of the main players do not cause Dion's ruin, but most people think that will be what comes to pass (320d8–321a1). Plato tells Dion to write if he requires something (321a5–6), but also wants letters to provide more information because in Athens there is nothing but rumour:

> καὶ ἡμῖν εἴ του δεῖ ἐπιστέλλετε· τὰ δ' ἐνθάδε παραπλησίως ἔχει καθάπερ καὶ ὑμῶν παρόντων. ἐπιστέλλετε δὲ καὶ ὅτι πέπρακται ὑμῖν ἢ πράττοντες τυγχάνετε, ὡς ἡμεῖς πολλὰ ἀκούοντες οὐδὲν ἴσμεν·
>
> … and write to us if you have need of anything. Matters here are almost the same as when you were with us. Write us also about what you have done or are doing, since though we hear many things we know nothing for certain. (321a6–b2)

Epistle 4 ends with εὐτύχει, "good luck", leaving us in suspense as to what will happen next (will Dion listen to Plato's warnings?). The next two letters, as Niklas Holzberg has well observed, strictly speaking interrupt the chronological arrangement of 1–4 and 7–8, but they provide a kind of pause

[34] This mention of the 'palinode' or recantation of Stesichorus, in which he repented of his earlier slander of Helen, forms a good example of the exploitation in the 'Platonic' *Epistles* of the wider Platonic corpus. The story of the Stesichorean palinode appears, of course, in the mouth of Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (243a3–b2), a text to which we will return.

between the hope mixed with anxiety of *Epistle* 4,[35] with its emphasis on Plato's separation from the action in Syracuse, and his ignorance of precisely what is happening, and the revelation in *Epistle* 7 that Dion is dead. Both *Epistles* 5 and 6 give us examples of Plato advising rulers: in 5 he writes to Perdiccas, king of Macedon a letter of recommendation for Euphraeus, an example of a common epistolary type,[36] while in 6, there is a striking expression of Plato's faith in the 'power of letters':

> Ταύτην τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πάντας ὑμᾶς τρεῖς ὄντας ἀναγνῶναι χρή, μάλιστα μὲν ἀθρόους, εἰ δὲ μή, κατὰ δύο, κοινῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ὡς οἷόν τ' ἐστὶν πλειστάκις, καὶ χρῆσθαι συνθήκῃ καὶ νόμῳ κυρίῳ, ὅ ἐστιν δίκαιον, ἐπομνύντας σπουδῇ τε ἅμα μὴ ἀμούσῳ καὶ τῇ τῆς σπουδῆς ἀδελφῇ παιδιᾷ, καὶ τὸν τῶν πάντων θεὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν τε ὄντων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων, τοῦ τε ἡγεμόνος καὶ αἰτίου πατέρα κύριον ἐπομνύντας, ὅν, ἂν ὄντως φιλοσοφῶμεν, εἰσόμεθα πάντες σαφῶς εἰς δύναμιν ἀνθρώπων εὐδαιμόνων.
>
> The three of you must read this letter, if possible, all together, otherwise in twos, and as often as possible in common. You must adopt it as a covenant and binding law, as is right, taking an oath—in earnest, but not without refinement, and together with the playfulness that is the sister of earnestness—in the name of the divine leader of all things present and future and in the name of the lordly father of this leader and cause, whom, if we are true philosophers, we shall all know clearly, as far as this is possible for those who are blessed.
> (323c6–d6)

This comes at a significant point in the collection, just before the real 'heart' of the collection, *Epistle* 7, in which letters play a key part. In *Epistle* 6 Plato's letter seems to have the ability to bring together in friendship Hermias, tyrant of Atarneus and Assos in the Troad, and his neighbours Erastus and Coriscus, through its being repeatedly read. But at this point in the collection this can only serve to remind us of Plato's injunction to Dionysius II in *Epistle* 2 to write to him if he hears rumours of criticism of him by Plato or his associates (including Dion). This failure of letters to heal potential rifts in a friendship with a tyrant contrasts strongly with the optimism of the end of *Epistle* 6. The end of that letter also alludes to a shared commitment to philosophical enquiry (in the form of the oath Plato asks that his addressees take), and this perhaps also hints at the differences between them and Dionysius II in philosophical ability and commitment. His lack thereof is another strong theme in *Epistle* 7, which immediately follows.

In *Epistle* 7 Plato writes to the friends and supporters of Dion in response to a letter of theirs asserting that they have the same intentions as Dion

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35 Holzberg 1994: 11.

36 On letters of recommendation, see Trapp 2003: 236–245 and Rees 2007.

had, and urging Plato's co-operation. The question of whether they share the same views and intentions as Dion allows Plato to review what these were, and to explain them ἐξ ἀρχῆς (324b6), and this beginning turns out to involve going back to events earlier in Plato's own life: the 'thirty tyrants', the death of Socrates and Plato's disillusionment with politics, and his conviction about the need for philosophical rulers (324b8–326b4). The main narrative event to have taken place since *Epistle* 4, the death of Dion, is related, at first, obliquely, through the use of past tenses to refer to Dion (e.g. εἶχεν, 323e10). Because of the scale of *Epistle* 7 it makes sense to include here a summary of its contents, before going to discuss the importance of letters in this letter:

Table 4: Summary of *Epistle* 7.

1. Plato's early life and disillusionment with politics (324b8–326b4)
2. First visit to Sicily, meeting Dion, his character (326b5–327b6)
3. The possibility of Dionysius II as philosophically enlightened ruler, Plato's apprehension about going to Sicily, reasons for going (327b6–329b7)
4. Plato's arrival in Sicily, Dion's exile, Dionysius II's attachment to Plato, resistance to philosophical life, Plato's return home (329b7–330c1)
5. Plato's advice to friends of Dion in present circumstances (330c9–337e2), including Dion's betrayal by two Athenians (333d7–334b1)
6. Plato's second visit to Dionysius II (337e3–350b5), including pressure on Plato to return, his resistance and eventual acquiescence (338b2–340a1), Plato's test of Dionysius II, the impossibility of Platonic writing about the highest truths of philosophy (340b1–345c3), Dionysius II's seizing of Dion's property and his betrayal of promises to Plato on this matter, made to keep Plato at Syracuse (345c4–347e5), worsening relations between Plato and Dionysius II, Plato's release secured through Archytas of Tarentum (348a4–350b5)
7. Plato's meeting with Dion at Olympia (350b6–351a1), Dion's intentions with regard to Syracuse and reasons for seeking power only to confer benefits (351a1–c7), Dion's error: underestimating depths of ignorance and evil of certain men (351c8–e2)

Letters feature prominently in *Epistle* 7 (see table 5 below): it is by means of a letter that Dion urges Plato to come to the court of Dionysius II in the first place (327d8–328b1), of which we hear a reported version in *Epistle* 7 (327d8–328b1). There is a close parallel to this letter later in *Epistle* 7, when it is *Dionysius II* who writes to Plato, urging him to return to Sicily, and of which

Plato quotes a part (339b4–c7).[37] But the letters which convince him to take his second trip to Dionysius II are those of Archytas and other Tarentines, who impress upon him the danger of a break between them and Dionysius if Plato were not to return. Letters, then, are the means by which Plato is drawn into both his visits to Dionysius II, and he fears the power of potential letters from Dionysius to Dion when Dionysius is blackmailing him about Dion's property (346e1–6).[38] But for all this power, when Plato gets Dionysius to agree to send a joint letter to Dion explaining the compromise that will allow him to continue to draw an income from his Sicilian property (347c1–6), and asking him whether this meets with his approval, Plato finds that it cannot bind the tyrant: Dionysius breaks the recent agreement and ends up selling Dion's property regardless of Plato's opinion (347d1–e5). But in the end it is letters which enable Plato's escape when his relationship with Dionysius II has deteriorated so much that he is living outside the Syracusan acropolis and in considerable physical danger: he writes to Archytas and other Tarentine friends and they secure his release (350a6–7).[39]

Table 5: letters in *Epistle* 7.

- Dion to Plato (327d8–328b1)
- Dionysius II to Plato (339b4–c7)
- Archytas et al. to Plato (339d1–6)
- Potential letter of Dionysius II to Dion (346e1–6)
- Joint letter of Plato and Dionysius II to Dion (347c1–6)
- Plato to Archytas and the Tarentines (350a6–7)

37 There is a further connection between these two letters in that in both cases Plato (rather ironically, given the length of *Epistle* 7) alludes to their length to shorten his summary/quotation of the letters (respectively λέγων δὲ τάδε ἐδεῖτο, εἰ μακρότερα εἰπεῖν (327e2–3) and ἐπιστολὴν πάνυ μακράν (339b4–5), τἆλλα δὲ μακρὰ ἂν εἴη καὶ ἄνευ καιροῦ λεγόμενα (339c7–d1)).

38 Φέρε, εἰ διανοεῖται τούτων μηδὲν ποιεῖν Διονύσιος ὧν φησιν, ἀπελθόντος δ' ἐμοῦ ἐὰν ἐπιστέλλῃ Δίωνι πιθανῶς, αὐτός τε καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς τῶν αὐτοῦ διακελευόμενος, ἃ νῦν πρὸς ἐμὲ λέγει, ὡς αὐτοῦ μὲν ἐθέλοντος, ἐμοῦ δὲ οὐκ ἐθελήσαντος ἃ προυκαλεῖτό με δρᾶν, ἀλλ' ὀλιγωρήσαντος τῶν ἐκείνου τὸ παράπαν πραγμάτων … ("Consider: Dionysius may mean to do none of the things he has said; but what if he should write plausibly to Dion when I have gone, and persuades a number of other friends of his to write, telling him what he has just said to me, that despite his being willing I refused to do what he asked me to do, and portraying me as utterly neglectful of the interests of that man?")

39 πέμπω παρ' Ἀρχύτην καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους φίλους εἰς Τάραντα, φράζων ἐν οἷς ὢν τυγχάνω·("I sent letters to Archytas and my other friends in Tarentum telling them of the situation in which I found myself …").

Although it is through letters that Plato is eventually rescued, *Epistle* 7 presents us with a much more complex picture of the 'power of letters' than the end of *Epistle* 6. Even if the dramatic date of *Epistle* 6 is *after* that of *Epistle* 7 (Hermias seems to have succeeded to the tyranny of Atarneus and Assos, which would make the dramatic date around 350), the fact that we read 7 after 6 means we come to review the faith in the letter's power at the end of 6, and perhaps are even tempted to read the instructions at the end of 6 as betraying an anxious desire to attempt to control his letter once it has left Plato's hands.

In the following epistle, *Epistle* 8, we meet more hope and more advice from Plato to the friends of Dion as to what they should do to bring an end to the faction on Sicily, such as the change of government to monarchy under the rule of law (354c2–355a1). Again the *position of this letter in the collection* is crucial. We have already seen Dion fail to listen sufficiently to Plato's warnings and advice, and the end to which he came. How much hope, then, is there for Dion's friends in *Epistle* 8? When we read the imagined advice of Dion were he alive, which Plato quotes in direct speech in the final part of *Epistle* 8 (355a8–357d2), we are brought face to face with the likelihood of failure. A dead man, who failed to heed Plato's advice himself now advises the same combination of kingship with the rule of law, and bids the appointment of three kings: Dion's son, Hipparinus, and Dionysius II (355e3–356c2). I suggest that another reason why the editor of the *Epistles* placed *Epistle* 8 here was the fact that other versions of the upheavals at Syracuse have Dion's son die before Dion (e.g. Plutarch, *Dion* 55, Nepos, *Dion* 4, Aelian, *Var. Hist.* III.4).[40] If the editor was aware of this tradition then the fact that the Dion who speaks in *Epistle* 8 seems not to be aware that his son is dead only serves to emphasise the impossibility of his and Plato's advice. They are so separated from the events at Syracuse that they do not realise what they advise is impossible.

The first eight letters in the collection thus take us to the end of the unhappy story of Plato's association with the Syracusan court and close with Plato's hopes for a future which is already lost. They evoke earlier stages of the unstable relationship with Dionysius II (e.g. in *Epistles* 1 and 2) and much of the background which led to Plato's involvement with Sicily, especially in the apologetic *Epistles* 3 and 7. Prominent in the first part of the collection is the role played by letters themselves in bringing Plato

40 See further Bluck 1947: 164–170.

to Sicily in the first place, in the developing relationships with Dion and Dionysius II, and in securing Plato's escape (where Archytas of Tarentum is key). There is also an emphasis on the connections and conflicts between tyrants and philosophers, and the hope (ultimately dashed) that the rule of the former might be benefited by the influence of the latter. The order is roughly chronological but this order is strikingly interrupted by *Epistles* 5 and 6 to create a sense of suspense about the extent to which Plato's advice to Dion will be heeded.

III. Endings and Beginnings: *Epistles* 9–13

I want to turn now to the second part of the *Epistles*, 9–13, which are usually described as "thematically connected" with the preceding eight letters,[41] but which are not usually subjected to close examination because the main narrative of Plato's adventures in Sicily is completed by *Epistle* 8. The final five letters of the collection allow us to reinterpret the development of Plato's character and his relationship with Dionysius II having just read what happened and seen Plato's changing attitudes of pessimism and optimism. Some are thus heavy with a species of dramatic irony, but we can also see more play with the notion of the power of letters and the limitations of this power.

Epistles 9 and 12 are both to Archytas of Tarentum,[42] who plays such an important role in rescuing Plato from his captivity at Syracuse. This in itself perhaps explains their presence in the collection, but they also seem to take us back to a time before Plato's involvement with the court of Dionysius II. In neither case is the dramatic date strongly felt, but the omission of any mention of Sicily perhaps suggests that these letters should be placed at a relatively early stage in the developing, largely epistolary relationship between Plato and Archytas. Hence they provide examples to the reader of the establishment of this crucial friendship–*Epistle* 9 shows us Plato receiving and looking after individuals sent and recommended by Archytas (Echecrates, 358b3–6, and perhaps Archippus and Philonides also, 357d5–e2), while *Epistle* 12 depicts them exchanging philosophical writings in a friendly manner:

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41 Cf. e.g. Holzberg 1996: 646, Rosenmeyer 2001: 215.

42 On the relationship of friendship between Archytas and Plato in *Epistle* 7 and beyond see Huffman 2005: 32–42.

Τὰ μὲν παρὰ σοῦ ἐλθόνθ' ὑπομνήματα θαυμαστῶς ὡς ἄσμενοί τε ἐλάβομεν καὶ τοῦ γράψαντος αὐτὰ ἠγάσθημεν ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα, καὶ ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν εἶναι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἄξιος ἐκείνων τῶν πάλαι προγόνων·

I was wondrously delighted to receive the treatises which came from you and filled with the utmost admiration for their author, who seemed to me a man worthy of his forefathers of old. (359c6–d3)

τὰ δὲ παρ' ἐμοὶ ὑπομνήματα, περὶ ὧν ἐπέστειλας, ἱκανῶς μὲν οὔπω ἔχει, ὡς δέ ποτε τυγχάνει ἔχοντα, ἀπέσταλκά σοι·

As to my writings, about which you wrote, they are not yet completed, but I have sent them to you in their current state. (359d6–e1)

The Plato of *Epistles* 9 and 12 does not know that his correspondence with Archytas will one day save his life, but the reader of the *Epistles* has by this point in the collection learnt this from *Epistle* 7.

I will pass over the very short *Epistle* 10, to look in more detail at *Epistles* 11 and 13, which both (in different ways) look back to earlier letters in the collection. *Epistle* 11, to one Laodamas, is of uncertain dramatic date (though there is a reference to Plato as having insufficient strength to travel because of his age: καὶ ἅμα οὐδὲ τῷ σώματι διὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἱκανῶς ἔχω πλανᾶσθαι καὶ κινδυνεύειν κατά τε γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν οἷα ἀπαντᾷ, καὶ νῦν πάντα κινδύνων ἐν ταῖς πορείαις ἐστὶ μεστά, "… and besides, at my time of life I have not the bodily strength for travelling and for facing up to all the dangers one meets on land and sea, and at the moment everything to do with travel is full of risk", 358e5–8), which perhaps suggests that this should be placed after his return from Sicily in 361 BC.[43] In any case its place in the collection makes it tempting to read this as evidence of Plato's conspicuous lack of success with Dionysius II. Laodamas has evidently written for Plato's help in founding a colony, and instead of travelling to Athens himself, hopes that Plato or the younger Socrates might travel to him:

ἐπέστειλα μέν σοι καὶ πρότερον ὅτι πολὺ διαφέρει πρὸς ἅπαντα ἃ λέγεις αὐτὸν ἀφικέσθαι σε Ἀθήναζε· ἐπειδὴ δὲ σὺ φῂς ἀδύνατον εἶναι, μετὰ τοῦτο ἦν δεύτερον, εἰ δυνατὸν ἐμὲ ἀφικέσθαι ἢ Σωκράτη, ὥσπερ ἐπέστειλας. νῦν δὲ Σωκράτης μέν ἐστιν περὶ ἀσθένειαν τὴν τῆς στραγγουρίας, ἐμὲ δὲ ἀφικόμενον ἐνταῦθα ἄσχημον ἂν εἴη μὴ διαπράξασθαι ἐφ' ἅπερ σὺ παρακαλεῖς.

I wrote to you earlier that it is very important with regard to all the things you mention that you yourself come to Athens; but since you say that this is impossible, the next best thing would be, as you have written, that I or

[43] Plato had tried to use the excuse of age in *Epistle* 7.338c3–4.

> Socrates should go to you, if possible. But Socrates is in ill health because of strangury, and it would be unseemly for me to go and not achieve the things for which you are summoning me. (358d2–e3)

But Plato is pessimistic about Laodamas' chances of success (ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτα γενέσθαι ἂν οὐ πολλὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχω—δι' ἃ δέ, μακρᾶς ἑτέρας δέοιτ' ἂν ἐπιστολῆς ἥτις πάντα διεξίοι, "For my part I do not have much hope that these things can be done, though to explain why would require a further long letter detailing all the reasons …", 358e3–5), and writes this letter instead, a "poor alternative" as Victoria Wohl has described it,[44] for the personal contact Laodamas craves. Plato also expresses to Laodamas that a constitution on its own is insufficient—there must also exist an authority in a city to oversee its daily life (εἰ γὰρ οἴονται[45] ὑπὸ νόμων θέσεως καὶ ὡντινων εὖ ποτε πολιτείαν κατασκευασθῆναι ἄνευ τοῦ εἶναί τι κύριον ἐπιμελούμενον ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς καθ' ἡμέραν διαίτης, ὅπως ἂν ᾖ σώφρων τε καὶ ἀνδρικὴ δούλων τε καὶ ἐλευθέρων, οὐκ ὀρθῶς διανοοῦνται, "If they think that a constitution can ever be well established by the setting up of laws, however good, without some authority in the city to look after the daily life of the citizens so that both free men and slaves are temperate and manly, they are mistaken", 359a2–7), and in most cities this has come about only at times of crisis, when an ἀνὴρ καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθός has arisen and wielded great power:

> καὶ γὰρ σχεδόν τι καὶ αἱ ἔμπροσθεν πόλεις οὕτω κατεσκευάσθησαν, καὶ ἔπειτα εὖ ᾤκησαν, ὑπὸ συμβάσεων πραγμάτων μεγάλων καὶ κατὰ πόλεμον καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας πράξεις γενομένων, ὅταν ἐν τοιούτοις καιροῖς ἀνὴρ καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἐγγένηται μεγάλην δύναμιν ἔχων·
>
> Indeed most cities in the past have been established in this way and then attained good administration under the force of circumstances during important events during war or other affairs, when in such crises a noble and good man has appeared and wielded great power. (359b3–8)

But the reader of the *Epistles* knows that even such a man may not be able to accomplish what is required—Dion, whom Plato considered to be just such a man, was overthrown and killed before he could carry out his plans for Syracuse:[46]

> Δίων μὲν γὰρ δή, μάλ' εὐμαθὴς ὢν πρός τε τἆλλα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς τότε ὑπ' ἐμοῦ λόγους γενομένους, οὕτως ὀξέως ὑπήκουσεν καὶ σφόδρα, ὡς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ὧν ἐγὼ προσέτυχον νέων, καὶ τὸν ἐπίλοιπον βίον ζῆν ἠθέλησεν διαφερόντως τῶν πολλῶν

44 Cf. Wohl 1998: 63–64.
45 Reading οἴονται (a MS correction) for οἷόν τε in Burnet (see Moore-Blunt 1985: 50 ad loc.).
46 Cf. also 4.320a1–b2, 7.335e3–336b4.

> Ἰταλιωτῶν τε καὶ Σικελιωτῶν, ἀρετὴν περὶ πλείονος ἡδονῆς τῆς τε ἄλλης τρυφῆς ἠγαπηκώς·
>
> For Dion was in all things quick to learn, above all in discussions with me, and listened carefully and eagerly in the manner of no other young man I had met, and he resolved to spend the rest of his life differently from the majority of Italians and Sicilians, since he had come to love virtue more than pleasure and other kinds of indulgence. (327a5–b4).

As if to underline this echo, *Epistle* 11 ends as *Epistle* 4 (the only one to Dion) did: εὐτύχει, "good luck" (322c1 ~ 359c3).

With *Epistle* 13 we end where we began, or indeed before where we began. *Epistle* 13, to Dionysius II, has one of the earliest dramatic dates in the collection, around 366, following Dion's exile and Plato's first visit to Dionysius II, at a date when relations between Plato and the tyrant are still very friendly. In a manner which recalls *Epistles* 3 and 8, there is some play at the beginning with the typically Platonic epistolary opening of εὖ πράττειν (ἀρχή σοι τῆς ἐπιστολῆς ἔστω καὶ ἅμα σύμβολον ὅτι παρ' ἐμοῦ ἐστιν·, "Let the beginning of my letter to you also be a sign that it comes from me", 360a3–4). And the first part of *Epistle* 13 shows us a scene very early in the relationship of tyrant and philosopher:

> τοὺς Λοκροὺς ποθ' ἑστιῶν νεανίσκους, πόρρω κατακείμενος ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ἀνέστης παρ' ἐμὲ καὶ φιλοφρονούμενος εἶπες εὖ τι ῥῆμα ἔχον, ὡς ἔμοιγε ἐδόκεις καὶ τῷ παρακατακειμένῳ—ἦν δ' οὗτος τῶν καλῶν τις—ὃς τότε εἶπεν· "ἦ που πολλά, ὦ Διονύσιε, εἰς σοφίαν ὠφελῇ ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος·" σὺ δ' εἶπες· "καὶ εἰς ἄλλα πολλά, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς τῆς μεταπέμψεως, ὅτι μετεπεμψάμην αὐτόν, δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτο εὐθὺς ὠφελήθην." τοῦτ' οὖν διασωστέον, ὅπως ἂν αὐξάνηται ἀεὶ ἡμῶν ἡ ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ὠφελία.
>
> Once when you were giving a banquet to the young Locrians you got up and came over to me (you were reclining some distance away from me) and greeted me with a phrase that was both affectionate and neatly turned, as it seemed to me and to the man reclining beside me (and a fair youth he was), who said: "No doubt, Dionysius, you have benefited much in wisdom from Plato." And you said, "And in much else besides, for from the moment I sent for him, by the very fact that I had sent for him, I benefited." So let us preserve this feeling so that our benefits to one another always increase. (360a4–b6)

Wohl has emphasised the erotic undercurrents in this scene, but of course the knowledge of what is to occur in the future means that a reader of the *Epistles* cannot help but remember that the 'romance' ends badly. The hope for an always mutually beneficial relationship is to be dashed. We also meet another mention of Archytas, here as part of the establishment of relations between Dionysius II and Archytas and the Tarentines (καὶ ἄνδρα, ὥσπερ ἐδόκει ἡμῖν τότε, ᾧ γε σὺ καὶ Ἀρχύτης, εἴπερ ἥκει παρά σε Ἀρχύτης, χρῆσθαι δύναισθ' ἄν, "[I am sending] also a man whom, as we agreed at the time,

both you and Archytas, if Archytas comes to you, could make some use of", 360b8–c2). But perhaps the most striking thing about *Epistle* 13 is its very 'personal' character—it is perhaps the most 'personal' of all the letters in the collection. It shows us Plato, who clearly draws on the resources of Dionysius II (τὸ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο περὶ χρημάτων ἄκουε ὥς σοι ἔχει, περί τε τὰ σὰ τὰ Ἀθήνησιν καὶ περὶ τὰ ἐμά. ἐγὼ τοῖς σοῖς χρήμασιν, ὥσπερ τότε σοι ἔλεγον, χρήσομαι καθάπερ τοῖς τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδείων, χρῶμαι δὲ ὡς ἂν δύνωμαι ὀλιγίστοις, ὅσα ἀναγκαῖα ἢ δίκαια ἢ εὐσχήμονα ἐμοί τε δοκεῖ καὶ παρ' οὗ ἂν λαμβάνω, "Now listen to the situation with regard to money, both yours at Athens and my own. I will make use of your funds, as I said to you, just as I do that of my other friends; but I am using it as sparingly as possible, and only so much as seems necessary or just or seemly, not to just from my point of view, but also to the man from whom I receive the money", 361c1–6), explaining his financial and family problems to Dionysius II:

> ἐμοὶ δὴ τοιοῦτον νῦν συμβέβηκεν. εἰσί μοι ἀδελφιδῶν θυγατέρες τῶν ἀποθανουσῶν τότε ὅτ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἐστεφανούμην, σὺ δ' ἐκέλευες, τέτταρες, ἡ μὲν νῦν ἐπίγαμος, ἡ δὲ ὀκταέτις, ἡ δὲ σμικρὸν πρὸς τρισὶν ἔτεσιν, ἡ δὲ οὔπω ἐνιαυσία. ταύτας ἐκδοτέον ἐμοί ἐστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐπιτηδείοις, αἷς ἂν ἐγὼ ἐπιβιῶ· αἷς δ' ἂν μή, χαιρόντων.
>
> This is how it stands with me. I have four daughters from nieces who died when I refused to be garlanded, though you were urging me to: one is now of marriageable age, another eight years old, another a little over three, and another not yet one. My friends and I must provide dowries for them, at least while I am still alive, though if I am not, they may provide for themselves.
> (361c7–d5)

Coming as it does at the end of the collection, we can now see that the temptations to which Plato must have been open were in the end resisted—Plato remained loyal to Dion in spite of the rewards which Dionysius II might have been able to afford him.

It also gives us a final, deeply ironic picture of Plato trying to encourage Dionysius II to philosophy and to pay heed to his letters:

> **ἔρρωσο καὶ φιλοσόφει** καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους προτρέπου τοὺς νεωτέρους, καὶ τοὺς συσφαιριστὰς ἀσπάζου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, καὶ πρόσταττε τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ Ἀριστοκρίτῳ, **ἐάν τις παρ' ἐμοῦ λόγος ἢ ἐπιστολὴ ἴῃ παρὰ σέ, ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ὅπως ὡς τάχιστα σὺ αἴσθῃ, καὶ ὑπομιμνῄσκειν σε ἵνα ἐπιμελῇ τῶν ἐπισταλέντων.** καὶ νῦν Λεπτίνῃ τῆς ἀποδόσεως τοῦ ἀργυρίου μὴ ἀμελήσῃς, ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα ἀπόδος, ἵνα καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πρὸς τοῦτον ὁρῶντες προθυμότεροι ὦσιν ἡμῖν ὑπηρετεῖν. Ἰατροκλῆς, ὁ μετὰ Μυρωνίδου τότε ἐλεύθερος ἀφεθεὶς ὑπ' ἐμοῦ, πλεῖ νῦν μετὰ τῶν πεμπομένων παρ' ἐμοῦ· ἔμμισθον οὖν που αὐτὸν κατάστησον ὡς ὄντα σοι εὔνουν, καὶ ἄν τι βούλῃ, αὐτῷ χρῷ. **καὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἢ αὐτὴν ἢ ὑπόμνημα αὐτῆς σῷζέ τε, καὶ αὐτὸς ἴσθι.**[47]

[47] There is a textual problem at the very end of *Epistle* 13. I have followed Morrow 1962:

> *Farewell, study philosophy*, and encourage the other young men towards it. Pass on my greetings to your fellow students of the spheres. Instruct Aristocritus and the rest that *if any word or letter comes from me, they should take care to bring it your attention at once and to remind you to attend to its contents*. And now do not forget to repay Leptines his money, but return it as soon as possible so that others, seeing your treatment of him, may be more eager to render us services. Iatrocles, whom I set free together with Myronides, is sailing with what I have sent. Put him in your pay, and use him as you wish, since he is well-disposed to you. *Keep this letter, or an abstract of it, and take it to heart*. (363c9–e5)

The final part of the collection of *Epistles* thus recalls the optimistic instructions at the end of *Epistle* 6 (323c6–d6) as to how to use an epistle of Plato's. But as we now know, having read the collection, Dionysius II in the end places no value on a letter from Plato, even one which he has jointly authored. In one sense, then, the *Epistles* show us the failure of Plato's letters to achieve what their sender wanted, and the beginning of this failure is what we close with in *Epistle* 13, the failure to convince Dionysius II to become a philosopher.

IV. Presence and Absence

The arrangement of the 'Platonic' *Epistles* is not straightforward: the sequence of chronologically ordered letters in the first part is interrupted by *Epistles* 5 and 6, while the final five letters take us back to before the end of the narrative we have read in *Epistle* 8. But this arrangement is effective: the placing of the second part of the collection, in particular *Epistle* 13, at the close of the collection allows the ironies and implications of Plato's eventual disillusionment failure to come out more sharply. *Epistle* 13, for example, might have been placed elsewhere (such as the very beginning of the collection to where it is transposed by some re-arrangements), but it would have been less powerful.

Epistle 13 shows us a rare example of the face-to-face relationship of Plato and Dionysius II working well, but places this in the distant past (from the perspective of the collection). No longer are Plato and the tyrant on such

269 (cf. Moore-Blunt 1985: 55) in printing καὶ αὐτὸς ἴσθι and interpreting ἴσθι as the imperative of οἶδα to mean something like 'know it yourself' (though other suggestions include 'read it yourself'). An alternative reading καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἴσθι would take ἴσθι as the imperative of εἰμί, so that the phrase would mean 'be how you are' or similar. See further Isnardi Parente-Ciani 2002: 277.

friendly terms. The letter also thus forms the culmination of the patterns in the 'Platonic' *Epistles* of the 'power of letters' (and their limitations) and the related play with the Platonic idea of philosophy as something properly conducted in face-to-face conversation (as opposed to in writing), which is clearest in the *Phaedrus*:[48]

> Δεινὸν γάρ που, ὦ Φαῖδρε, τοῦτ' ἔχει γραφή, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὅμοιον ζωγραφίᾳ. καὶ γὰρ τὰ ἐκείνης ἔκγονα ἕστηκε μὲν ὡς ζῶντα, ἐὰν δ' ἀνέρῃ τι, σεμνῶς πάνυ σιγᾷ. ταὐτὸν δὲ καὶ οἱ λόγοι· δόξαις μὲν ἂν ὥς τι φρονοῦντας αὐτοὺς λέγειν, ἐὰν δέ τι ἔρῃ τῶν λεγομένων βουλόμενος μαθεῖν, ἕν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταὐτὸν ἀεί.
>
> Of course, you see, Phaedrus, that writing has this odd characteristic, and it really is similar to painting: the objects produced by painting stand as though alive, but if you ask them something they remain most solemnly quiet. And the same is true of written words—you might think they speak intelligently, but if you ask something out of a desire to learn about what they say, they always say one and the same thing. (275d4–9)

In the *Phaedrus* it is not through writing (useful only as an *aide-mémoire*, 275c–d) but rather philosophical conversation (dialectic) that one encourages in others the lasting benefits of philosophy:

> πολὺ δ' οἶμαι καλλίων σπουδὴ περὶ αὐτὰ γίγνεται, ὅταν τις τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος, λαβὼν ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν, φυτεύῃ τε καὶ σπείρῃ μετ' ἐπιστήμης λόγους, οἳ ἑαυτοῖς τῷ τε φυτεύσαντι βοηθεῖν ἱκανοὶ καὶ οὐχὶ ἄκαρποι ἀλλὰ ἔχοντες σπέρμα, ὅθεν ἄλλοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἤθεσι φυόμενοι τοῦτ' ἀεὶ ἀθάνατον παρέχειν ἱκανοί, καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα εὐδαιμονεῖν ποιοῦντες εἰς ὅσον ἀνθρώπῳ δυνατὸν μάλιστα.
>
> I think it is far better when there is serious discussion of these matters, when someone employs the art of dialectic, choosing a fitting soul, and plants and sows words alongside knowledge, which can help both themselves and their planter, not being barren but bearing seed from which other words grow in different characters, and so able to continue doing this always, and which make he that has them as happy as humanly possible. (276e4–277a4)

In the *Epistles*, in contrast, though the collection begins with a letter upbraiding Dionysius II, letters appear a much better vehicle for the conduct of friendship and philosophy between Plato and the tyrant: letters (as we can see from *Epistle* 2) have been able to effect a healing of the rift which caused Plato to leave Sicily (the occasion of *Epistle* 1),[49] have even enabled some philosophical instruction (312d2–5), and are Plato's suggested means of addressing any further upset in their friendship (310d3–6). But in

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[48] Cf. the similar characterisation of poetry's similar inferiority (because of its inability to answer one's questions) to philosophical conversation in the *Protagoras* (347e1–348a2).

[49] Cf. 313c5–7.

person Plato and Dionysius II struggle to make progress, either as friends or as partners in philosophical enquiry, as we can see from their difficult conversation recalled by Plato in *Epistle* 3 (319b–c) or Plato's account in *Epistle* 7 of Dionysius' fear of too close an engagement in philosophical conversation with Plato (330a–b). There was a clue, of course, in the *Phaedrus* to the failure of dialectic to succeed with Dionysius II: the *dialektikē technē* described above by the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* involves "choosing an appropriate soul" (λαβὼν ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν, 276e6).

It is in the context of the greater efficacy of letters over conversation in the *Epistles* which we should see both the role played by letters in drawing Plato back to Sicily after his first disappointment (338b2–3401a) and the striking close to *Epistle* 6. Ultimately, however, the collection emphasises the limitations of the power of letters: they cannot save Dion and they could not convert Dionysius II to philosophy. It is in order to emphasise these limitations that *Epistle* 13 (and so the collection) closes with an instruction to preserve the letter and take it to heart,[50] underlining the importance of the collection's order and arrangement in achieving the powerful and distinctive irony at its close.

[50] Either the letter itself or a ὑπόμνημα or "abstract" / "reminder" of it (363e4): it may be that we are supposed to think here too of the *Phaedrus* and the capacity of writing simply to remind (ὑπομνῆσαι, 275d1) someone who already knows about its topic. If so this would be a further pointer to the ultimate futility of this instruction, the letter in which it is found, and Plato's whole project of turning Dionysius II into a philosopher.

EPISTOLARY EPICUREANS

Pamela Gordon

> Send me a little pot of cheese, so that—when I wish—I may have a feast.[1]

Sayings, rejoinders, and retorts are the salient media for the construction of the biographies and teachings of most of the philosophers who appear in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers* (third century AD). The great Greek philosophers tend to speak in one-liners that Diogenes presents alongside or within anecdotes about their lives. Occasionally Diogenes embeds a letter to, from, or about a philosopher, but these letters appear only sporadically. When letters do appear, each is presented either in full or as an extended quotation.[2] The exception emerges in Diogenes' last and tenth book, whose subject is Epicurus and the Epicureans. In the biography of Epicurus, the prominent vehicles are the fragmentary letter and the allusion to letters. Why letters, when creative biographers could have continued the pattern set by the use of anecdote, aphorism or clever repartee in the accounts of Solon, Socrates, Diogenes the Cynic, and the other philosophers?[3] And why fragments of letters, when the letters of the other

[1] From a letter of Epicurus as recorded by Diogenes Laertius (10. 11): πέμψον μοι τυροῦ [...] κυθριδίου, ἵν' ὅταν βούλωμαι πολυτελεύσασθαι δύνωμαι. All texts of Diogenes Laertius quoted here are from Long 1964. For texts of Epicurus, I depart from convention by citing the text of Diogenes Laertius (the only source for Epicurus' three extant epistles). Throughout this essay, all translations are my own unless otherwise stated. This chapter revisits some of the issues I raised in Gordon 2012. University of Michigan Press has kindly granted permission to reprint some of the material that appears on page 77 and pages 80–88 in that volume.

[2] Examples include the letters of Solon (1.64–67), letters to and from Periander (1.99–100), letters from Pherecydes to Thales (1.22), Pythagoras to Anaximenes (8.49–50) and Archytas to Dionysius (3.22).

[3] In contrast, the sayings—the *Kuriai Doxai*—of Epicurus are relegated to the end of Laertius' work, entirely discrete from the bios that contains all of the biographical information and the survey of the friends and enemies of Epicurus. That the teachings of Epicurus could be conducive to explication via maxim or simplified version of Epicurus' *Principle Doctrines* is illustrated by Seneca's epistles, which so often end with a pithy Epicurean saying. The *tetrapharmakos* ("four-fold remedy") preserved by the first-century BC Epicurean Philodemus represents the Epicureans' own gnomic reduction of the central teachings.

philosophers are presented as complete texts or full paragraphs? I hope to show here that fragments of personal or intimate letters—or ersatz personal letters—were as essential to the invention of the Epicurean as philosophical epistles were to the promulgation of Epicureanism.

I. Epicurus' Epistolary Oeuvre

In the case of Epicurus and his biographer, part of any answer to "why letters?" must acknowledge historical reality: Epicurus was a letter writer. The three main non-fragmentary surviving texts of Epicurus are epistolary: the *Letter to Pythocles*, the *Letter to Menoeceus*, and the *Letter to Herodotus*. Diogenes Laertius (our only source for these letters) presents them not as part of Epicurus' biography, but—because he has a special interest in Epicureanism—as texts that best outline the philosophy of the Garden.[4] All three philosophical epistles offered synopses of primary teachings or abridgements of longer non-epistolary books, the letter format being a pedagogical tool.[5] Thus the circumvention of the issue of authenticity (as proposed by Morrison in this volume) is often not necessary in the case of Epicurus. Unlike readers of the letters attributed to Plato who are hoping to hear the "unmediated voice of Plato the man", readers of Epicurus' epistles turn to them as surveys of philosophy rather than as documents that reveal or create Epicurus as a person.[6]

The prominence of epistles in Epicurus' oeuvre is tightly connected with the fundamental nature of Epicurean philosophy. Overt, systematic recruitment of new members may not have been standard practice.[7] And yet, Epicureanism was a social movement that offered its salvific teachings to all comers, an outlook later encapsulated in the Epicurean *tetrapharmakos*,

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[4] "I will try to present his teachings [in the 41 best books] by providing three of his letters in which he epitomizes his entire philosophy" (Ἃ δὲ αὐτῷ δοκεῖ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐκθέσθαι πειράσομαι τρεῖς ἐπιστολὰς αὐτοῦ παραθέμενος, ἐν αἷς πᾶσαν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιτέτμηται, Diog. Laert. 10. 28–29). The case of Epicurean letters, intended to be circulated among a particular community with non-mainstream beliefs, bears some similarity to the community-building and -strengthening role of early Christian letters, on which see further McLarty's contribution to this volume; also Olson (p. 362 note 49).

[5] Cf. Epicurus' acknowledgement of Pythocles' request for a shorter presentation of earlier works (Diog Laert. 10.84).

[6] See Morrison in this volume (pp. 107–108).

[7] On recruitment during the first generation of the Garden, see Frischer 2007. On Epicurean teachings as a medicine that cures human fears, see Kilpatrik 1996. The ancient sources include Lucretius and Diogenes of Oenoanda in addition to Philodemus.

or "four-part cure" for human suffering.[8] The *tetrapharmakos*—apparently formulated for memorization—was the briefest crystallization of the Epicurean position, but Epicurus' writing of epitomes of his own works was indicative of his effort to make his system comprehensible to all. Epicurean philosophical epistles like those to Menoeceus were a means for disseminating Epicurean wisdom that put the focus on the daily philosophical practice of ordinary people. As Andrew Morrison has put it in a discussion of Horace's *Epistles*, a letter—as opposed to a didactic treatise or a poem like the *De Rerum Natura*—presents Epicureanism as "an ethical project which can't finish";[9] philosophy "is too urgent, and it needs to be 'done' every day".[10] But the Epicurean teachings presented in the works I have referred to above as "philosophical epistles" (more on that designation below) are tailored not to the needs of one particular person, but to a plurality of types of people at particular stages of philosophical study. The *Letter to Herodotus* will help those acquainted with some details but who cannot see the forest for the trees (Diog. Laert. 10.). The *Letter to Pythocles* is easier to grasp than Epicurus' larger works and will help beginners recall the basic teachings (Diog. Laert. 10.). The *Letter to Menoeceus* assures readers that it is never too late—and never too early—to turn to philosophy (Diog. Laert. 10.).

One hindrance to distinguishing ancient citations to similar philosophical epistles from allusions to or quotations of more personal Epicurean correspondence is the lack of ancient Greek terms that distinguish between personal correspondence and philosophical *epistles*.[11] Occasionally the diminutive form ("little letter", ἐπιστόλιον) seems to signal that a particular text was an item of private correspondence rather than an epistolary essay or treatise, but in the case of Epicureanism we must consider whether the diminutive is used by outsiders to express contempt for the Garden of Epicurus, which Plutarch called not the Garden (κῆπος) but "the *little* garden" (τὸ κηπίδιον; *Non Posse* 1098b).[12] In general, the ancient sources designate all letters, whether private or not, simply as "epistles" (ἐπιστολαί). Despite the absence of a clear nomenclature, however, the ways a particular letter exhibits its epistolarity reveals a difference.

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[8] The Epicurean *tetrapharmakos* was an abbreviated version of the first four *Principal Doctrines*: "The gods do not concern us; death is nothing to us; what is good can be easily obtained; what is bad can be avoided" (*PHerc* 1005.5.9–13), Angeli 1988.

[9] Morrison 2007: 130.

[10] Morrison 2007: 131.

[11] Diogenes' inclusion of a collection of twenty-two letters or epistolary books "concerning Empedocles" in his list of writings by Hermarchus is particularly enigmatic.

[12] My text for Plutarch is Westman 1959.

The three epistles preserved in full by Diogenes Laertius display very rudimentary epistolary window dressing: the greeting at the opening; the quick exhortation at the end (though the latter element is absent from the *Letter to Herodotus*).[13] The *Letters* to Herodotus and Pythocles contain a few vocatives, but all of them work as introductions or signposts for a new topic or the conclusion of the letter. For example, Epicurus opens the *Letter to Herodotus* with "For those not able, Herodotus, to study in depth everything I have written about physics …" (Τοῖς μὴ δυναμένοις, ὦ Ἡρόδοτε, ἕκαστα τῶν περὶ φύσεως ἀναγεγραμμένων ἡμῖν ἐξακριβοῦν …, Diog. Laert. 10.35). At a later point he writes: "First, Herodotus, one must understand the meanings that underlie words …" (Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τὰ ὑποτεταγμένα τοῖς φθόγγοις, ὦ Ἡρόδοτε, δεῖ εἰληφέναι …, Diog. Laert. 10.37). Then toward the close of the *Letter to Pythocles* we have: "Remember all the foregoing, Pythocles" (Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα, Πυθόκλεις, μνημόνευσον, Diog. Laert. 116). Thus the vocatives might be called generic: they add focus without calling attention to any particularity of the addressee. That Herodotus is not the only intended recipient of the epistle addressed to him is clear at the start: "for *those* (plural) not able to study in depth …" This phrase is key to understanding the genre of all three letters: they are *surveys* or *epitomes* written for an audience beyond the single addressee.

The *Letter to Menoeceus* attains a bit more of the status of a letter by virtue of its comparative brevity and its inclusion of some singular imperatives that exhort the addressee to "do and practice" (ταῦτα καὶ πρᾶττε καὶ μελέτα, 10.123) or to "consider" (δόξαζε).[14] The first lines of this epistle imply that the addressee of the *Letter to Menoeceus* might think that he is at the wrong stage of life for studying philosophy, and thus may impart the impression of "the weight of the reader" (so important in fictional letters), but there is no explicit characterization of the addressee.[15] Instead, the opening lines are a call for everyone to embark on the study of philosophy, whether young

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[13] Where the other epistles use singular imperatives to urge the addressee to keep the foregoing material in mind, the *Letter to Herodotus* concludes by stating that "someone" (τις) who grasps the foregoing will have more vitality than other people; and that even those (plural) who comprehend only the rudiments can achieve peace of mind (Diog. Laert. 10.83).

[14] As Inwood 2007: 143 notes, the *Letter to Menoeceus* is roughly a third the length of the *Letter to Pythocles*, and less than a fourth the length of the *Letter to Herodotus*.

[15] "The Weight of the Reader" is the title of the third chapter (pages 87–116) of Altman 1982. A papyrus fragment from Herculaneum suggests that there was a Menoeceus among the early Epicureans, but here in the *Letter* he is simply a name. Scholary disagreements over his age highlight the lack of specificity: while most modern readers assume Menoeceus might consider himself too old, others take him as young man.

or old: "Epicurus to Menoeceus, greetings. May no one put off the study of philosophy in youth, or grow weary of studying philosophy in old age". Epicurus' reflections on the salubriousness of philosophical study at any stage of life of suggest no narrative, but serve instead to inform readers (Menoeceus and other aspiring Epicureans) that this text offers *introductory* instruction about the care of the soul.

The *Letter to Pythocles* opens with a paragraph that calls attention to its epistolarity in ways not found in the other two epistles. This is the only letter that is framed as a response to a letter from the addressee. The first words are: "Cleon brought a letter from you …" (Ἤνεγκέ μοι Κλέων ἐπιστολὴν παρὰ σοῦ …, Diog. Laert. 10.84). Next, the opening lines recapitulate the request contained in Pythocles' letter: "… you asked me to send a clear and concise account of celestial phenomena, so that you might remember it easily" (ἐδέου τε σεαυτῷ περὶ τῶν μετεώρων σύντομον καὶ εὐπερίγραφον διαλογισμὸν ἀποστεῖλαι, ἵνα ῥᾳδίως μνημονεύῃς). Epicurus is happy to oblige: "I am delighted to have received your request, and I am looking forward to this with pleasure" (ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡδέως τέ σου τὴν δέησιν ἀπεδεξάμεθα καὶ ἐλπίσιν ἡδείαις συνεσχέθημεν). Two aspects of this opening highlight the letter's status as a piece of correspondence (fictive or not): the naming of the specific messenger; and Epicurus' expression of his willingness to respond.

Interestingly enough, the first-century BC Epicurean scholar and poet Philodemus mentions the suspicion that the *Letter to Pythocles* (which he cites unambiguously as "the epitome on celestial phenomena addressed to Pythocles") and "certain other letters" were inauthentic.[16] With Philodemus behind him, Epicurus' first modern editor Hermann Usener proposed that the *Letter to Pythocles* was inelegantly sewn together from various chapters of Epicurus' voluminous *On Nature*.[17] If this is the case, it is noteworthy that the opening lines of the *Letter to Pythocles* are more overtly letter-like than those of the models. It is as though an overzealous compiler aiming for verisimilitude chose signposts of authenticity from the wrong genre. The first 130 words of the *Letter to Pythocles* present a hybrid: the letter is a response to the particular needs of the named addressee, but Pythocles is not to keep it to himself: "the following presentation will be useful to many others, especially those who have just recently gotten a taste of natural science …" Most significantly, the last line in the opening of the *Letter to*

16 Philodemus, *P.Herc* 1005; Angeli 1988. Like Philodemus' other scholarly works (known only from Herculaneum papyri), the text is fragmentary.

17 Usener 1881: xxxix.

Pythocles calls attention to the public nature of the *Letter to Herodotus* by advising Pythocles to read it too (Diog. Laert. 10.85).

The fragmentary text of Philodemus does not indicate what it was about the *Letter to Pythocles* that made it sound inauthentic to some ancient Epicurean readers. Perhaps they were bothered by the letter's hybridity or its unwieldy length. Nevertheless, the three epistles have essential attributes in common: none supplies any news, requests a response, or offers details about the disposition of writer or addressee.[18] Other than Epicurus' polite assertion that he is pleased to write the *Letter to Pythocles*, the letters contain no expression of emotion. Nor do they suggest a dramatic date or the geographical location of letter writer or recipient. As a collection, they make no attempt to create a narrative or an "illusion of temporal sequence"[19] or testify to "the power of letters" as described by Morrison in this volume.[20] The apparently authentic philosophical epistles by Epicurus cited by authors as diverse as Cicero, Philodemus and Seneca were probably similar in character.

II. Intercepting the Mail[21]

Diogenes Laertius' references to the rest of Epicurus' correspondence (or alleged correspondence) reveal an entirely different pattern. An outline of the first few pages of Diogenes' treatment of Epicurus will demonstrate the distinction and will illustrate the prominence of letters in ancient representations (mostly hostile) of the life and character of Epicurus. I hope it will also highlight the centrality of food, sex, women, womanizing and idiosyncratic language, all of which are recurrent concerns in ancient discussions of Epicureanism. First—after briefly reviewing Epicurus' education and early career—Diogenes mentions that Diotimus the Stoic maligned Epicurus by composing fifty "dirty letters" and passing them off as "from Epicurus" (ἐπιστολὰς φέρων πεντήκοντα ἀσελγεῖς ὡς Ἐπικούρου, 10.3) Next, Diogenes refers to the slanderer who attributed to Epicurus some (presumably salacious)

[18] Morrison (2007: 114) also cites a question ("Who do you judge better than one who holds a holy belief about the gods and doesn't fear death?", 10.133) as a sign of the overt epistolarity of the *Letter to Menoeceus*, but in my view this is a rhetorical question that is not indicative of an epistolary genre.

[19] See De Pretis (2004: 141, on Horace's *Epistles*).

[20] See Morrison, this volume (pp. 117–120).

[21] For intercepted letters in narrative see further this volume's Introduction (p. 19); see also Rosenmeyer (p. 55), Bär (p. 227), and Repath (pp. 238, 260 note 85).

letters that others assign to the Stoic Chrysippus (10.3). After mentioning these spurious collections, Diogenes summarises false information about Epicurus disseminated by Posidonius, Nicolaus, Sotion and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. These writers had asserted that Epicurus assisted his parents in their contemptible trades (the mother a caster of spells, the father a schoolmaster); that one of his brothers prostituted himself and consorted with "Leontion the hetaera"; that Epicurus recycled the writings of Democritus and Aristippus; and that he was not an Athenian citizen (10.4).

Next Diogenes mentions the claim that Epicurus wrote letters that flattered Lysimachus' minister Mithras, addressing him as though he were Apollo: "Healer, and Lord" (Παιᾶνα καὶ ἄνακτα). At this point (still in Diogenes' inventory of hostile sources), we meet two lines presented as fragments of letters to women named Leontion and Themista. The language of these letters is extravagant: "By Lord Apollo, my dear little Leontion, how we burst into applause when we read your letter" (Παιὰν ἄναξ, φίλον Λεοντάριον, οἵου κροτοθορύβου ἡμᾶς ἐνέπλησας ἀναγνόντας σου τὸ ἐπιστόλιον, 10.5). And to Themista: "If you (plural), and Themista in particular invite me, I am capable of twirling thrice and rushing to wherever you are" (Οἷός τε [...] εἰμί, ἐὰν μὴ ὑμεῖς πρός με ἀφίκησθε, αὐτὸς τρικύλιστος, ὅπου ἂν ὑμεῖς καὶ Θεμίστα παρακαλῆτε, ὠθεῖσθαι, 10.5).[22] The signification of "twirling thrice" is opaque for modern readers, and the five-syllable word for "applause" (κροτοθορύβου) was obscure enough in antiquity to receive an entry in the *Suda* (with this fragmentary letter as the only source; Adler number: kappa, 2480).

Diogenes also records flamboyant language that these sources assert was to be found in a letter from Epicurus to Pythocles: "And to Pythocles, who happened to be good looking, he said 'I shall sit here awaiting your desired, godlike entrance'" (πρὸς δὲ Πυθοκλέα ὡραῖον ὄντα 'Καθεδοῦμαι, φησί, προσδοκῶν τὴν ἱμερτὴν καὶ ἰσόθεόν σου εἴσοδον', 10.5). The reference to Pythocles' attractiveness is apparently meant to insinuate that erotic desire was involved. There follows a reference to one Theodorus who mentions another letter from Epicurus to Themista in the fourth book of his *Against Epicurus*.[23] Theodorus, or another unnamed source, also mentions letters to many hetaerae, and to Leontion in particular, "with whom Metrodorus [the Epicurean] was *also* in love" (10.5). (As is often the case, it is difficult to tell

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22 Clay 1998: 247 translates "on a three-wheeled cart", but also stresses the "enthusiasm and warmth" of the phrase.

23 Along with most scholars, I find this particular reference inscrutable: "and again, writing to Themista he thinks he preaches to her" (καὶ πάλιν πρὸς Θεμίσταν γράφων νομίζει αὐτῇ παραινεῖν, 10.5).

whether Diogenes has moved on to a new author.) Soon after this, we have the notorious quotation that alludes to Odysseus and the Sirens: "Hoist sail, blessed boy, and flee all culture" (Παιδείαν δὲ πᾶσαν, μακάριε, φεῦγε τἀκάτιον ἀράμενος, 10.6). The epigrammatic character of that line is similar to the spirit of the pithy sayings recorded in the other books of Diogenes Laertius, but here the quotation is identified as a line from a *letter* to Pythocles.[24] Perhaps this notorious fragment (also mentioned by Plutarch and others), along with the one that mentions Pythocles' "godlike entrance" comes from Philodemus' text of the 'epitome on celestial phenomena addressed to Pythocles'. Could there have been two letters to Pythocles that treated celestial phenomena, one authentic and one spurious? The effusive language and the reference to Pythocles' attractiveness in the latter might explain why its authenticity was questioned. After surveying these letters, Diogenes Laertius refers to the abuse broadcast by the Stoic Epictetus, who called Epicurus a *cinaedologus* ("preacher of effeminacy").

Next, Diogenes mentions a non-extant tract, the *Merrymakers* by Timocrates, the brother of Epicurus' colleague Metrodorus. Elsewhere we learn that Timocrates once said that he "loved his brother as nobody else could, and hated him as nobody else could" (Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism* Col. 22b). Here Diogenes reports that this Timocrates was a disgruntled Epicurean student who wrote the *Merrymakers* as an exposé of the Epicureans' alleged intemperance and depravity. In this exposé, he claimed that he had barely escaped what he referred to as a mystery cult and "those nighttime philosophies" of the Garden (τὰς νυκτερινὰς ἐκείνας φιλοσοφίας καὶ τὴν μυστικὴν ἐκείνην συνδιαγωγήν, 10.6). According to Diogenes Laertius, Timocrates cited letters to document his critique. Among Timocrates' many allegations in the *Merrymakers* was the claim that Epicurus spent an entire *mina* per day on food, "as he himself says in the letter to Leontion, and in the letter to the philosophers at Mytilene" (10.7). Timocrates or another hostile source also quotes a hostile reference to Nausiphanes found "in the letters." (Here too, Diogenes strings one piece of data after another without signaling a change of source or subject.)

To sum up this catalogue of the letters of Epicurus as quoted by hostile observers Diogenes interjects: "But these people are insane" (Diog. Laert. 10.9), an assertion he follows with testimonials to the kindness, goodness

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24 The connection between *Catalepton 5* and this particular letter from Epicurus to Pythocles is the subject of Diskin Clay (2004). Clay reviews the references to this line by Plutarch and others.

and patriotism of Epicurus, and to the worldwide friendships he fostered. Epicurus' correspondence appears less frequently in this section, where Diogenes offers his opinions of Epicurus or cites Epicurean-friendly sources. But references to letters of Epicurus resume when Diogenes offers documentation of Epicurus' well regulated appetite. Having noted Epicurus' usual satisfaction with bread and water alone, he quotes: "Send me a little pot of cheese, so that—when I wish—I may have a feast" (10.11). Diogenes also asserts that Epicurus replaces the formulaic epistolary "Greetings" (literally "Take joy") with "Conduct yourself well", and "Live earnestly" (καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς ἀντὶ τοῦ Χαίρειν Εὖ πράττειν καὶ Σπουδαίως ζῆν, 10.14), an assertion that is, curiously, contradicted by the three extant philosophical epistles.[25] The last letter Diogenes mentions before he moves on to the three epistolary epitomes is one to Idomeneus, where the dying Epicurus writes that he is joyful despite his suffering, and enjoins his addressee to take care of the children of a fellow Epicurean:

> Τὴν μακαρίαν ἄγοντες καὶ ἅμα τελευταίαν ἡμέραν τοῦ βίου ἐγράφομεν ὑμῖν ταυτί. στραγγουρικά τε παρηκολούθει καὶ δυσεντερικὰ πάθη ὑπερβολὴν οὐκ ἀπολείποντα τοῦ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς μεγέθους. (5) ἀντιπαρετάττετο δὲ πᾶσι τούτοις τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν χαῖρον ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν γεγονότων ἡμῖν διαλογισμῶν μνήμῃ. σὺ δ' ἀξίως τῆς ἐκ μειρακίου παραστάσεως πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιμελοῦ τῶν παίδων Μητροδώρου.
> (Diog. Laert. 10.22)

> On this happy day, and the last one of my life, I write this to you:
> Strangury and dysentery are causing as much suffering as they possibly can. And yet the spiritual joy in the memory of our past conversations compensates for all of this. But please, as befits the attitude you have had toward me and toward philosophy since you were a boy, take care of the children of Metrodorus.

Whether these letters are cited as praise or condemnation, their "letteriness" is emphatic. All of them put some aspect (or supposed aspect) of Epicureanism or the character of Epicurus on display, but their status as private messages is indicated with economical precision. It is as though the next step would have been to give them a postmark or address. Epicurus writes to

[25] For opening formulae in [Plato]'s letters see Morrison in this volume (pp. 114–115). To explain this discrepancy, Brad Inwood (2007: 143) suggests that the salutations of the three letters have been "normalised" for insertion into Diogenes' text. Elsewhere Diogenes attributes Εὖ πράττειν not to Epicurus, but to Plato (Diog. Laert. 3.61). That greeting then appears in Plato's letter (Diog. Laert. 8.80) and is listed in the title of a collection of letters by Strato (5.60). Lucian claims that Epicurus used the salutation "Be healthy" (*Pro Lapsu*. 6).

a hetaera, a married woman and to an attractive young man. He makes specific requests of the addressee, as when he asks for an invitation or a small gift of food. Specific posting dates are implied: Epicurus on his deathbed, Epicurus while Leontion or Themista is away from Athens, or while he is waiting for Pythocles. He indulges in exuberant expressions that reveal his overwhelming affection for or flattery of his addressees, as when calls Mithras "Healer and Lord", or tells "dear little Leontion" that he burst into applause when he read her letter. The divulging of scandalous information is also characteristic: he writes 50 "dirty letters" or confides to Leontion that he has spent a huge sum on food.

For Diogenes Laertius, all of these letters—with the exception of Epicurus' deathbed letter and his request for a modest meal—are patently spurious documents or jokes circulated by people of unsound mind: "these people are insane" (Diog. Laert. 10.9). Although antipathy toward Epicureanism is the more likely explanation, I believe that Diogenes is right to judge them counterfeit. The implicit presentation of these texts as purloined or intercepted letters is their most telling attribute. The supposedly unintended reader is to imagine that careless self-disclosure and opportunistic interception have exposed a sordid reality. When the letters attest to Epicurean depravity, the implication is that the third-party eavesdropper enjoys access to information that Epicurus meant to keep private.[26] The outsider overhears the outrageous cost of Epicurus' food, gets a sampling of his comically eccentric vocabulary, or listens in on his conversations with or about a hetaera. The tacit assertion that the letter has been opened by someone other than the intended addressee gives it the badge of authenticity: here is the *real* Epicurus. The Garden's notoriety would be enough to spur the fabrication and collection of incriminating letters, and Epicureans could respond with favorable documents from their own hagiographies. Thus a friendly reader catches him expressing concern for children, or discovers that Epicurus was pleased with a mere pot of cheese. The deathbed letter to Idomeneus preserved by Diogenes Laertius offers a succinct description of Epicurean theory about the sage's ability to be joyful despite his pain, and may well be authentic. But regardless of the issue of authenticity, it is essential to note that Diogenes offers it as a counterweight to the array of fragments that present Epicurus in a negative light.

26 On literary letters as private communication "overheard" by the "eavesdropping" reader, see the Introduction to this volume (pp. 3, 14), and the contributions by Slater (p. 207), Bär (pp. 226–227), and Repath (p. 237).

Allusions to and fragments of Epicurean personal letters preserved elsewhere exhibit attributes similar to those in the letters quoted by Diogenes Laertius, and some of them provide affirmation of Diogenes' opinion that they are fictional. Frank disclosure (always fictive, in my opinion) is again a dominant motif in these additional letters. For example, personal letters from Epicurus to another founding member of the Garden named Hermarchus is mentioned in Athenaeus' *Learned Banqueters*.[27] There the character Myrtilus has just finished his catalogue of witty remarks by hetaerae, and moved on to stories about hetaerae and philosophers, starting with Epicurus. After establishing Epicurus' lack of education by quoting Epicurus himself and then some parodic lines from Timon of Phlius, Myrtilus says:

> οὗτος οὖν ὁ Ἐπίκουρος οὐ Λεόντιον εἶχεν ἐρωμένην τὴν ἐπὶ ἑταιρείᾳ διαβόητον γενομένην; ἣ δὲ οὐδ' ὅτε φιλοσοφεῖν ἤρξατο ἐπαύσατο ἑταιροῦσα, πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς Ἐπικουρείοις συνῆν ἐν τοῖς κήποις, Ἐπικούρῳ δὲ καὶ ἀναφανδόν·ὥστ' ἐκεῖνον πολλὴν φροντίδα ποιούμενον αὐτῆς τοῦτ' ἐμφανίζειν διὰ τῶν πρὸς Ἕρμαρχον Ἐπιστολῶν. (13.588b)

> Did not this Epicurus have as his lover Leontion, who was notorious for being a hetaera? She did not stop being a hetaera when she began to "philosophize," but had sex with all the Epicureans in their gardens, even in front of Epicurus, leading him in his distress over her to divulge the issue in his *Letters to Hermarchus*.

Athenaeus may have known of an authentic collection of Epicurus' letters to Hermarchus, but I doubt that Epicurus' worries about Leontion appeared in them. Hermarchus was one of the four founding members of the Garden known as "the men," and the implication elsewhere is that Hermarchus lived in the original community. Are we to imagine that Hermarchus was out of town when Epicurus wrote to him about Leontion? Perhaps. But more importantly, as I have shown elsewhere, a typical mode of anti-Epicurean discourse claimed that an array of hetaerae inhabited the Garden.[28] It is possible that some of the women were invented by hostile sources, but Cicero and a few other ancient sources suggest that Leontion was a serious student and writer. Detractors who present Leontion as a mere "hetaera" are bent on describing the licentiousness of the male Epicureans.

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27 Athenaeus is quoted from Kaibel 1890.
28 Gordon 2012: 72–107.

The best external corroboration of Diogenes' judgment that some of the epistolary documents were fakes comes from Aelius Theon, a first-century AD teacher of grammar and rhetoric.[29] In his treatise on composition and public speaking, Theon cautions teachers to make sure their students avoid florid, quasi-lyrical language of the sort found in many orations by Hegesias and the so-called Asianist orators, and "in certain works of Epicurus, such as he writes *somewhere* to Idomeneus: 'Oh you who have since your youth considered all my sensations delightful'" (οἷά που καὶ πρὸς Ἰδομενέα γράφει 'ὦ πάντα τἀμὰ κινήματα τερπνὰ νομίσας ἐκ νέου', *Progymnasmata* 71). Theon's "somewhere" (που) indicates either that he was quoting from memory, or that he had seen it secondhand, perhaps only as the one-line excerpt he quotes. Next, he offers a second quotation of "Epicurus", prefacing it with a more explicit expression of doubt. Here he condemns the unseemly style of texts "circulating *as* those of Epicurus, but to this day I do not find them anywhere in his collected works" (καὶ τῶν περιφερομένων δ' ὡς ἐκείνου—ἡμεῖς δ'οὐδέπω καὶ νῦν αὐτὰ εὑρίσκομεν ἐν τοῖς συγγράμμασιν αὐτοῦ, *Progymnasmata* 71).

Theon's second example sounds comical: "Tell me, Polyaenus, how may I rejoice, how may I be delighted, how may there be great joy for me?"[30] Neither quotation is found outside Theon's *Progymnasmata*. Theon does not mention that the style of Hegesias and the Asianists was widely considered effeminate, but he could expect his readers to know this. The attribution also to Epicurus of an effeminate style would fit with anti-Epicurean discourse promoted in Roman sources (by Cicero in particular), and in Greek authors who wrote during the Roman Empire. We have already seen that Epictetus, for example, called Epicurus a "cinaedologus",[31] a term difficult to bring into English but that connotes transgressive, effeminate sexuality. As I have shown elsewhere, Roman anti-Epicurean discourse frequently juxtaposes *Voluptas* (a Roman construction of "Epicurean" pleasure) with Roman *Virtus* (manliness).[32]

Although Theon is suspicious of their authenticity, his opinion of the style of his "quotations" of Epicurean letters is clear. Outsiders had been

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29 Quotations of Aelius Theon are from Spengel 1854.

30 Here I quote from the translation of George Alexander Kennedy 1999: 14. Kennedy is translating a text of the *Progymnasmata* that has been reconstructed from an Armenian version (Patillon) which improves upon the Greek but may still be corrupt. See Kennedy, page 14, note 60. λέγε δή μοι, Πολύαινε, συναπέριμεν μεγάλη χαρὰ γένηται. ὡς χαρῶ, ὡς τέρψωμαι.

31 Cited at Diog. Laert. 10. 7.

32 Cicero and Seneca in particular present the Virtus/Voluptas polarity when they censure the Garden. See Gordon 2012: 109–138.

lampooning Epicurean language for centuries, and in some circles the way Epicurus spoke deserved as much derision as his alleged intemperance. The New Comic playwrights began spoofing Epicurean language as early as the lifetime of Epicurus (or soon thereafter). An extensive fragment from Damoxenos' *Foster Brothers*, for example, mixes predictable jokes on Epicurean bodily pleasures with a humourous presentation of Epicurean vocabulary. There a comic cook uses Epicurean terms to describe his own cooking and his experience as a profligate student in the Garden.[33] Send-ups of peculiarly Epicurean terms are common elsewhere too, as in a pseudo-philosopher's talk of the "consolidiation of pleasure" and "the lack of disturbance of the flesh" in Alciphron's *Letters of Parasites* (second or third century AD).[34] Also in the second century AD, the Stoic Cleomedes found Epicurean language not comical, but disgusting: "Some of these expressions might be said to have brothels as their source, others to resemble the language of women celebrating the rites of Demeter at the Thesmophoria, still others to come from the synagogue and its suppliants—debased Jew talk, far lower than the reptiles!"[35]

Quotation out of context might be as incriminating as fictive frank disclosure. Plutarch's anti-Epicurean piece *A Pleasant Life Impossible*, for example, records excerpts of letters addressed to Timocrates, the exposé writer mentioned by Diogenes Laertius. Plutarch quotes seven lines from an unidentified comedy in which carousing slaves eat, drink, sing, or try to break through a girlfriend's door. He follows the quotation with: "Don't these words sound like Metrodorus writing to his brother: 'There is no need to save the Greeks, or to earn a crown of wisdom from them; what we need, Timocrates, is to eat and drink wine, a pleasure and no harm to the belly'?" (ἢ γὰρ οὐ τούτοις ἔοικε τὰ Μητροδώρου πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν γράφοντος· 'οὐδὲν δεῖ σῴζειν τοὺς Ἕλληνας οὐδ' ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ στεφάνων παρ' αὐτῶν τυγχάνειν, ἀλλ' ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν οἶνον, ὦ Τιμόκρατες, ἀβλαβῶς τῇ γαστρὶ καὶ κεχαρισμένως, *Non*

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33 Damoxenos (fr. 2 K-A) is quoted in Athenaeus 3.102. For more New Comic parodies of Epicurus, see Gordon 2012: 14–37.

34 τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἀόχλητον καὶ τὴν καταπύκνωσιν τοῦ ἡδομένου, Alciphron 3.19.8. Quotations of Alciphron are from Schepers 1905. For further discussion of Alciphron's *Letters of Parasites*, see König in this volume, pp. 197–206.

35 ὧν τὰ μὲν ἐκ χαμαιτυπείων ἄν τις εἶναι φήσειε, τὰ δὲ ὅμοια τοῖς λεγομένοις ἐν τοῖς Δημητρίοις ὑπὸ τῶν Θεσμοφοριαζουσῶν γυναικῶν, τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ μέσης τῆς προσευχῆς καὶ τῶν ἐπ' αὐλαῖς προσαιτούντων, Ἰουδαϊκά τινα καὶ παρακεχαραγμένα καὶ κατὰ πολὺ τῶν ἑρπετῶν ταπεινότερα. Translation by Bowen and Todd 2004: 125. Cleomedes quotes *Iliad* 2.246–247. On Cleomedes' horrific anti-Semitism, see Johnson 2004 and Gruen 1998. My quotations of Cleomedes are from Todd 1990.

Posse 1098c). Quoting from memory must have been common in eras when unrolling a book to find a passage was a laborious task—if the book was even available. But Plutarch's own words elsewhere indicate how inexact a quotation may be. When he quotes these lines again in a different work, the text is missing the word "wine" and instead of "belly" we find "flesh" (*Adv. Col.* 1125d). Plutarch also offers another quotation from Metrodorus' letters to his brother: "Around the belly, Timocrates my man of natural science, lies the Good" (*Non Posse* 1098d). These quotations may be relatively accurate, but, stripped of their original context, they are hard to evaluate. And is it possible that Plutarch's source is not the collected correspondence of the letter writer (Epicurus), but the books or records of the outraged recipient (Timocrates)? At any rate, Plutarch writes as though he has caught the Epicureans in the act by riffling through their mail.

In Plutarch's works and other anti-Epicurean writing, the focus on food goes hand in glove with an interest in women. Although we cannot know exactly what Diotimus the Stoic invented, many of the letters that appear in Diogenes Laertius share a focus on sensuality and sex. Because critics of Epicurus believed (or liked to claim) that the satiation of extravagant bodily desires was central to Epicurean practice, they made frequent use of allegedly purloined letters to Pythocles and various hetaerae. The letters confirm the stereotypical complaint against the Epicureans: all body and no mind. Two passages from Greek anti-Epicurean discourse encapsulated the connection between women and comestibles. First, there is Plutarch's joke on the contrast between Archimedes and Epicurus: Instead of crying out εὕρηκα ("eureka!" or "I have found it!"), the Epicurean yells: βέβρωκα or πεφίληκα ("I have eaten!" or "I have kissed!", *Non Posse* 1094c). Second, there is this moment in Athenaeus:

> Ἐπικούρειος δέ τις εἰκαδιστὴς τῶν συνδειπνούντων ἡμῖν ἐγχέλυος παρατεθείσης 'πάρεστιν, ἔφη, ἡ τῶν δείπνων Ἑλένη· ἐγὼ οὖν Πάρις ἔσομαι.' καὶ χεῖρας μήπω τινὸς ἐκτετακότος ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἐπιβαλὼν ἐψίλωσε τὸ πλευρὸν ἀνάγων εἰς ἄκανθαν.
>
> *The Learned Banqueters* 7.298d–e

> When an eel was served, an Epicurean who was dining with us said, "The Helen of dishes has arrived; so I shall be Paris". And before anyone had reached for the eel, he fell upon it and devoured it, leaving nothing but bone.

An Epicurean-friendly letter might also focus on food, as in the reference to "a little pot of cheese," but there Epicurean austerity is the point. Other Epicurus-friendly letters are equally partisan, countering the stereotypes by presenting an abstemious and wise Epicurus. Epicurus could be redeemed, for example, by illustrating his filial piety and his belief that a woman can

learn philosophy. Thus we have the *Letter to Mother*, an Epicurean text that appears in the second-century AD inscription of another Diogenes whom we know now as Diogenes of Oenoanda.[36] This letter in the voice of Epicurus emphasises its epistolarity by focusing on a response to the mother's inquiries, and by referring to the funds delivered to the apparently young Epicurus via Cleon. (Presumably we are meant to think of him as the same messenger mentioned in the *Letter to Pythocles*). For Epicurus, abundant support is unnecessary:

μετὰ
δὴ τοιούτων ἡμᾶς ἀ-
γαθῶν προσδόκα, μῆ-
τερ, χαίροντας αἰεὶ καὶ
ἔπαιρε σεαυτὴν ἐφ' οἷς
π̣ράττομεν. τῶν
(col. 2) μ[έν]τ̣οι χορηγιῶν
φ̣είδου, πρὸς Διός,
ὧν συνεχῶς ἡμεῖν
ἀποστέλλεις.

Think of us then, mother, as always joyful in the midst of such good things and show enthusiasm for what we are doing. But in heaven's name, do not be so generous with the contributions which you are constantly sending us.
(Fragment 126, the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda)

The lengthy letter also reveals how personal pronouns, imperatives and two vocatives ("oh mother") draw attention to "the particularity of the I-you", a feature that Altman lists at the top of her catalogue of characteristics of epistolary discourse, "the *I* of epistolary discourse always having as its (implicit or explicit) partner a specific *you* who stands in unique relationship to the *I*".[37] This Epicurus consoles his mother and offers an explanation of the phenomenon of nightmares according to Epicurean scientific theory. Having explained the mechanics of dreaming, he tells her not to be alarmed by nightmares she has had about her distant son:

π̣ρὸς οὖν ταῦτα,
(col. 3) ὦ μῆτερ, [θάρρει· μ]ὴ
γὰρ ἐπιλ[ογίσῃ τ]ὰ̣ φά-
ζματα ἡμ[ῶν κακά]. τ̣ί-

[36] See Gordon 1996: 66–93, and Fletcher 2012. Quotations and translations of Diogenes of Oinoanda are from Smith 1993.

[37] At the top of a list of characteristics of epistolary discourse, Altman includes the following (1982: 117) "*Particularity of the I-you*, the *I* of epistolary discourse always having as its (implicit or explicit) partner a specific *you* who stands in unique relationship to the *I*".

θει δ' αὐτ[ὰ ὁρῶσα] κα-
θ' ἡμέρα[ν ἀγαθ]όν τι
ἡμᾶς π[ροσκ]ṭωμέ-
νους εἰς [τὸ μακρ]οτέ-
ρω τῆς ε[ὐδαιμ]⟨ο⟩νίας
προβαίν[ειν.

Therefore, with regard to these matters, mother, [be of good heart: do not reckon] the visions you have [of us to be bad]; rather, [when you see them], think of us daily [acquiring] something [good] and advancing [further in happiness].

The *Letter to Mother* offers a snatch of biography, a lesson in natural science and a character portrayal that confronts a negative stereotype.[38] But it functions also as a formal, canonical document on stone that counters a mass of intercepted letters. Contradicting the letters that represent his lack of gravity and his crude desires, the *Letter to Mother* portrays Epicurus as a young man who assures his mother that modest funds will suffice, and who imparted Epicurean wisdom to her. The walls of Diogenes' stoa in Oenoanda present the letter as an internal Epicurean document now opened for all eyes to see.

Turning back to Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of the Greek Philosophers*, a fundamental difference emerges between Epicurus' deathbed letter to Idomeneus and the *Letter to Mother* on the one hand and the letters catalogued by Diogenes Laertius on the other. The former present extended quasi-autobiographical texts that that were developed or preserved by followers of Epicurus. What we have in the latter is the construction of evidence about Epicurus via letters summarily cited or quoted by primarily hostile sources. Instead of presentations of full texts, we find citation, allusion and fragment. Rather than individual letters that present a narrative, we have rapid-fire vilification.

Here Theon's inability to locate some "quotations" of letters from Epicurus in the authentic collections becomes more relevant (*Progymnasmata* 71, as quoted above). It is not merely a matter of fabrication of fictional Epicurean correspondence. Diotimus the Stoic may have written fifty whole letters, but Theon attests to the circulation of *fragments* of letters of Epicurus. The most unflattering or comical quotations have survived as disembodied snippets, but this is not the usual case of chance survival in which we happen to have a sole line from an ancient text because someone quoted from a larger document. Here the fragment is the thing. Some are lifted out of

38 See Gordon 1996: 66–93 and Fletcher 2012.

context by an author like Plutarch, where the purpose is to broadcast particularly vile Epicurean ideas. But I believe that others were inventions, some perhaps culled from the lines delivered by "Epicurean" cooks in New Comedy (which could explain their quasi-metrical shape), and some created simply as examples of the *sorts of things* Epicurus said. Putting words into Epicurus' mouth was a common technique in texts that added rhetorical flourish to presentations of anti-Epicurean discourse. Athenaeus' Myrtilus, for example, "quotes" Epicurus by recording "the *sort of things*" Epicurus says when he praises ignorance (13.588b). And Cicero invents "Epicurean" conversation when presents a mock interview of Epicurus in which the philosopher retorts to Cicero, in Latin: "I can find many people—no, countless people—less inquisitive and bothersome than you are, whom I can easily persuade to believe whatever I want".[39]

III. Conclusion

To return to my first questions: Why letters, and why *fragments* of letters? Historical reality plays a role. Diogenes Laertius gives us three samples of philosophical epistles, and we know from the texts of Philodemus that Epicureans collected the letters of Epicurus, carefully dated by archon year. I hope that my description and critique of the philosophical epistles preserved by Diogenes demonstrate that there is no overlap in style or content between the array of fragmentary quotations and the three philosophical epistles.

Now I must clarify my question: Why fragments of *purloined* letters? My answer is that the presentation of quotations as snatches of intercepted letters has everything to do with the reputation of the Garden of Epicurus as a secret school of vice. Timocrates' exposé, where the references to overindulgence, hetaerae, "nighttime philosophies", and the mystery cult of the Garden sets the tone. The fact that this reputation had already taken shape during Epicurus' life is demonstrated by the *Letter to Menoeceus*, in which Epicurus responds:

> Ὅταν οὖν λέγωμεν ἡδονὴν τέλος ὑπάρχειν, οὐ τὰς τῶν ἀσώτων ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰς ἐν ἀπολαύσει κειμένας λέγομεν, ὥς τινες … νομίζουσιν, … οὐ γὰρ πότοι καὶ κῶμοι συνείροντες οὐδ' ἀπολαύσεις παίδων καὶ γυναικῶν οὐδ' ἰχθύων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα

[39] *Reperiam multos vel innumerabiles potius non tam curiosos nec tam molestos quam vos estis, quibus quidquid velim facile persuadeam*, Cic. *De fin.* 2.28. My quotations of Cicero are from Schiche 1915.

> φέρει πολυτελὴς τράπεζα, τὸν ἡδὺν γεννᾷ βίον, ἀλλὰ νήφων λογισμὸς καὶ τὰς αἰτίας ἐξερευνῶν πάσης αἱρέσεως καὶ φυγῆς καὶ τὰς δόξας ἐξελαύνων, ἐξ ὧν πλεῖστος τὰς ψυχὰς καταλαμβάνει θόρυβος. Ep. *Men.* 132.
>
> So whenever we say that pleasure is the *telos* (the fulfillment or end), we do not mean the pleasures of degenerates and pleasures that consist of physical enjoyment, as some assume [...] It is neither continuous drinking parties nor physical enjoyment of boys and women, or fish or other elements of a lavish banquet that produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning and searching out reasons for choice and avoidance, and banishing the sorts of received opinions that cause the greatest disturbance of the spirit.

For outsiders, Epicurean apologies were a cover for their devotion to the grosser pleasures, which demonstrated in turn that Epicureans tended to be unrestrained and effeminate (attachment to pleasure being a womanish vice in both Greek and Roman cultures). Thus anti-Epicurean discourse relied on crude letters in which Epicurus expressed salacious desires or spoke in unseemly ways. Letters and rumors of letters could be backed up by other genres of documentation. Plutarch, for example, reports that the skeptical Academic Carneades (second century BC) claimed to have gotten a peek at Epicurus' private notes. He ridiculed Epicurus for keeping a ledger to help him remember the details of his pleasures, such as: "how often I had intercourse with Leontion," or "where I drank Thasion wine," or "on which twentieth of the month I dined most sumptuously" (*Non Posse* 1089c).

I end with another question: When Epicurus writes a letter, is the content philosophical or intimate? The collections of now lost letters of Epicurus most likely included many that expressed philosophical ideas in texts that were directed to implied readers who were close Epicurean friends and students. Many of these may have included personal greetings and reminiscences of past occasions. These letters would have been archived by the scholars of the Garden as lessons to others about the individual ways that philosophy must be "done" everyday. Their interception would have revealed nothing along the lines of the "dirty letters" written by Diotimus the Stoic. Quoting an actual philosophical text out of context was also effective. Lines from a letter by Metrodorus that elevates belly above country—particularly if Plutarch changed "to drink" to "to drink *wine*"—become distorted when they are wrenched from their original context. But supposedly intimate correspondence to and about Leontion and Pythocles, and letters that mention overindulgence in food are the stuff of improvised parody and exposé.

Alciphron's *Letters of Courtesans* (second or third century AD) demonstrate how a writer might parodically merge references to historical Epi-

curean philosophical epistles with fictional allusions to private love letters. There the deliberate conflation of the amorous with the philosophical provides the basis of erudite humour in a letter "from Leontion" to another hetaera (or courtesan) named Lamia. Within Leontion's letter, there are references to other letters: Leontion deplores the correspondence she receives from an aged, jealous and lecherous Epicurus who has besieged her and wants to make her his "Xanthippe" (an allusion to Socrates' wife). Leontion confides that she will run anywhere, "fleeing from land to land to escape his incessant letters" (4.17.3). As Rosenmeyer writes, Epicurus uses these letters "to control, to pester, to express 'ownership'".[40] The texts pressed upon Leontion by this fictive and nearly octogenarian Epicurus are described at one moment as confidential ("well-sealed") letters, and at the next moment as philosophical books (4.17.2).[41] Thus Alciphron merges the various types of Epicurean epistolary into one. For Leontion, all letters from Epicurus are interminable and unpleasant no matter their genre.

Purported fragments of personal letters were the ideal vehicle for presenting the data that anti-Epicurean discourse required. Epicurus' political and theological theory and his teachings about the size of the sun drew ridicule in antiquity, but nothing was as funny as Epicurus' language or so revealing as what Epicurus wrote to a woman. Epicurus had written epitomes of his own works, and—because they were intended for specific types of students—he addressed them to representative readers in epistolary form. As we know from a papyrus fragment from Herculaneum (*P.Herc.* 1005), such letters proliferated as Epicurus' followers produced letters under his name. Thus Epicurus was known as a habitual letter-writer and hostile outsiders responded in kind, quoting Epicurean letters out of context or fabricating "fragments" that had no whole.

[40] Rosenmeyer 2001: 300.

[41] Confusing the *Principal Doctrines* with *On Nature*, Leontion mixes up and ridicules the titles: "his *Principal Doctrines about Nature* and his distorted Canons" (τὰς περὶ φύσεως αὑτοῦ κυρίας δόξας καὶ τοὺς διεστραμμένους κανόνας, 4.17.2).

THE LETTERS OF EURIPIDES[1]

Orlando Poltera

The five letters of Euripides are most certainly a product of the Second Sophistic.[2] They seem to share the same structural outline with other collections of fictitious letters attributed to historical personalities of the fifth century BC, which Holzberg includes under the general heading of "Greek epistolary novel":[3] generally, the action is confined to a short period of their lives. The writer speaks in the first person and gives the readers some personal insights, but there is no intention on his part to deceive them. This is why scholars today rightly speak of them as pseudonymous letters.[4]

The above outline of the small epistolary corpus considered in this paper points to a literary exercise of the well-known type of *ethopoieia*.[5] However, this judgement of the letters of Euripides seems too restricted, since it ignores the artful composition of the collection, the clever choice of addressees, to a certain extent the intellectual background, and, in short, the very intention of the unknown author.

The present investigation of the letters of Euripides will begin (§ I) with a brief résumé of the text's contents, followed by (§ II) a comparison of Euripides' persona as represented in his "lives" (*bioi*) and in the letters, and (§ III) a reading of the letters as engaging intertextually with those attributed to Plato. It will then consider the riddling or playful nature of the text in relation to (§ IV) the identity of the characters appearing in them and (§ V) in particular the letter addressed to Sophocles.

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1 To simplify matters, though these are fictitious letters, I shall continue to refer to Euripides as their author.

2 Cf. the convincing results of the study of Gösswein 1975. Cf. too Jouan and Auger 1983: 186–187 and Hanink 2010: 537–564.

3 Holzberg 1994b: 1–4.

4 Cf. Rosenmeyer 2006: 97.

5 Cf. Malosse 2005: 61.

I. Material Matters and Brief Résumé

Our collection consists of five freestanding letters without any connective narrative.[6] They are all from the same sender: the late Euripides. Three of them are very short (about 20 lines in Gösswein's edition), the final two are approximately three and four times longer. The letters are arranged in chronological order and cover the short period before Euripides leaves Athens for Macedon to travel to the court of the ruler Archelaos (1–4); the last letter is written after his arrival in Pella (5). The first three letters introduce the main themes, giving us partial insights into the author's motifs. These insights are further developed in the last two letters which give us all the information we need for the complete understanding. Therefore, it seems suitable, in the case of the fourth, but particularly in that of the fifth letter, to speak of them as explanatory letters. This matches with Holzberg's observation that such letters are often present in the epistolary collections which he groups under the heading of "ancient epistolary novels".[7] However, because of the limited nature of our collection, we can better speak of an "epistolary novelette".[8]

There are five letters, but only three addressees: King Archelaos, the tragedian and rival Sophocles, and Cephisophon.[9] Three are addressed solely to King Archelaos and they form the very framework of the short novel. In the first, Euripides explains the reasons why he is sending back the money offered to him by the king for coming to his court; he then implores the king's pardon for two young citizens of Pella who were imprisoned. The second letter is addressed to the famous tragedian Sophocles whose ship sank while he was travelling to Chios. Sophocles survived, together with his whole entourage, but unfortunately he lost all his tragedies.[10] The second part of

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[6] For such freestanding letters compare the *Letters of Themistocles* and *Chion of Heraclea*, Rosenmeyer 2006: 48–55.

[7] Holzberg 1994b: 14–17.

[8] Hanink 2010: 544.

[9] The addressees are not always mentioned explicitly, cf. *infra*, § IV. Morrison, in this volume (pp. 107–131), discusses similar philosophical-ethical letters, addressed in that case by Plato to the ruler Dionysius II of Syracuse.

[10] Jouan and Auger 1983: 183 link this disaster with the Athenian expedition against Samos, when Sophocles had the supreme command in the Samian War in 441/40. But Athenaeus (13, 81, 603 e), citing Ion of Chios, makes no allusion to it: φιλομεῖραξ δὲ ἦν ὁ Σοφοκλῆς, ὡς Εὐριπίδης φιλογύνης. Ἴων γοῦν ὁ ποιητὴς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιγραφομέναις Ἐπιδημίαις γράφει οὕτως (*FGrHist* 392 T 5b)· Σοφοκλεῖ τῷ ποιητῇ ἐν Χίῳ συνήντησα, ὅτε ἔπλει εἰς Λέσβον στρατηγός, ἀνδρὶ παιδιώδει παρ' οἶνον καὶ δεξιῷ. κτλ. ("Sophocles was as much a lover of young boys as Euripides was a lover of women. At least, Ion the poet says the following in his work intitled *epidemiai* ("encounters"):

this letter contains a great surprise: Euripides is apparently in charge of his friend's house in Athens according to Sophocles' written orders. This relationship between the two tragedians is anything but expected. In the third letter, again addressed to the Macedonian ruler, Euripides praises Archelaos for his magnanimity: the young prisoners have been released. Their arrival in Athens, accompanied by their old father, will cover the king with great glory. At the same time, Euripides assures the king that he is aware of his debt and promises to repay him; but he does not specify how he intends to do so. The next letter, the fourth in the series, is once more addressed to Archelaos: it consists essentially of philosophico-ethical considerations about the εὖ ποιεῖν, the virtue of a good ruler. It develops further the reflections on Euripides' gratitude for the liberation of the young prisoners, which were first mentionned at the end of the preceding letter.[11] A special place is reserved for the god who appears to favour Archelaos.[12] Finally, Euripides exhorts Archelaos to use his power and wealth to attract the best poets of the Greek cities and to offer them all the means necessary to allow them to progress. In doing so, Archelaos would be praised for his generosity, and his role as monarch would be of lesser importance than that of a beloved friend. The fifth and final letter is by far the longest. As a whole, it is the extensive and antithetical answer to the first part of the first letter.[13] Euripides writes from Macedon, where he has just arrived, to Cephisophon, one of his best friends in Athens and the caretaker of his house.[14] First, Euripides makes some remarks about his journey and the pressure Archelaos is putting on him to write tragedies

I met Sophocles the poet at Chios while he was sailing as general to Lesbos. When he was in wine, he was a playful man, but also a clever one." [This and all the other translations are my own.]) Thus, the shipwreck is likely to be an invention of our author. Doing so, he introduces a mere literary *topos*, cf. n. 47.

11 Perhaps this part is influenced by the discussion—in the neoplatonic circles—about the meaning of the riddle "βασιλεύς" in the second letter of "Plato". For this question, cf. Dörrie 1976: 390–405.

12 θεός: 4.16, 22, 24, 26. Similar thoughts are found in the choral lyric, cf. Simon. Fr. 256, 259, 260 Poltera, and are common to the tragic poets. θεός correlates with οἱ ἄξιοί, "the estimables", a moral concept which appears there as well (4.4, 18, 27 [sg.], 45).

13 There are verbal echoes, for example 1.4–5 ἀποδέξεσθαι ἡμᾶς / 5.5 ἀπεδέξατο ἡμᾶς Ἀρχέλαος ("approve my decision / Archelaos received me"; the meaning of the first ἀποδέξεσθαι is hardly "jds. Grundsätze billigen" [to endorse someone's principles], as intended by Gösswein 1975: 89). Moreover, the motif of envy is found in his epilogue too: initially, Euripides is very afraid for his reputation, which is why he refuses the money from Archelaos (1.5–9; cf. Holzberg 1975: 15); but finally, his mood changes into anger against his fellow citizens and becomes the main reason for his abandoning Athens.

14 A certain Cephisophon seems to have been Euripides' prefered actor, cf. Aristophanes (*Ran.* 944 and 1408), and Sommerstein (2003/4).

in return for the hospitality he is being offered. But the main aim of this letter is to give recommendations to Cephisophon on how to face the slanderous attacks of Euripides' enemies who are criticising him for abandoning Athens. There is no need to debate with them, Euripides says, but simply to explain to the reasonable people that it was neither wealth nor the desire for power that convinced him to join the court of Archelaos. To prove his words, he has already sent all the gifts he received from Archelaos to his Athenian friends. He concludes with an explanation of his friendship with Sophocles and the repetition that his enemies do not deserve any attention. The style of this letter is highly rhetorical; moreover, it offers a fine concentric composition.[15] All this clearly points to the importance the author attaches to this explanatory letter.

II. The Person of Euripides in His "Lives" / in His Letters

Testimonies on the life of the Athenian poet Euripides are not available before the Hellenistic Age. The most reliable is certainly the year of his death (407/6 BC) preserved on the Marmor Parium, the famous chronicle from 264/3 BC. All the other information seems to be taken from Satyrus' books which dealt with the lives of the three tragedians and from which some fragments of papyri have survived. Fortunately, the latter concern the life of Euripides.[16] Little is known about Satyrus but it appears that he belonged to the Peripatetics and probably lived during the third century BC.[17] Satyrus' book was compiled in the γένος from which all the other sources

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15 19–25 περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐπέστειλας ἡμῖν σὺ μὲν εὖ ποιεῖς ἐπιστέλλων ἃ δοκεῖς ἡμῖν εἰδέναι διαφέρειν· ἴσθι μέντοι μηδὲν μᾶλλον ἡμῖν ὧν νῦν ᾿Αγάθων ἢ Μέσατος λέγει μέλον ἢ τῶν ᾿Αριστοφάνους φληναφημάτων οἶσθά ποτε μέλον. καὶ τούτοις γε ἂν ἀδικήσαις ἡμᾶς εἰς τὰ μάλιστα ἀποκρινάμενός ποτε, κἂν ὅλως μὴ παυομένους τῆς ἀναγωγίας αὐτοὺς ὁρᾷς correspond 91–95 σὺ μέντοι εὖ ποιεῖς περὶ τούτων ἡμῖν γράφων, ἐπειδήπερ οἴει ἡμῖν διαφέρειν· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εὖ ποιεῖς γράφων, οὕτως ἀδικεῖν σε φήσαιμ' ἂν ἡμᾶς ἀντιλέγοντα ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τοῖς οὐκ ἀξίοις (19–25: "As to the letter you wrote me, you are well advised to write me all you think it should interest me. But you have to know that I don't care more about the idle talk of Agathon and Mesatos now than I did then, as you know, about that of Aristophanes. If ever you answer them, you would hurt me deeply, even though they will not desist from their unpleasantness." / 91–95: "You are well advised to write me about all these things which in your mind concern me. Nevertheless, though doing well in writing me, to a certain degree you hurt me, because you defend me against people who are not worthy of it"); cf. Costa 2001: 174 *ad* 76.

16 *P.Oxy*. 1176, published by Hunt 1912: 124–182; now available in the new edition with commentary by Schorn 2004. On Satyrus, see also Hägg 2012: 77–84 and Knöbl 2010: 37–58.

17 Cf. Wilamowitz 1899: 633–636.

seem to derive,[18] the author of our letters surely not being an exception. Therefore, the letters of Euripides will not supply us with anything valuable concerning the historical Euripides; they are, rather, a literary exercise. Now it seems that our author takes great pleasure in correcting the traditional image of Euripides.[19] We discover a man who is respected by the Athenians, a man who, in his old age, cultivates a close friendship with Sophocles, despite having initially disdained the latter for his excessive ambition, and finally a man who is, at the end of his life, victim of partisan attacks from two rival poets, Agathon and Mesatos. Undoubtedly, all this is a deliberate counterpart to the main literary tradition.[20] And Jouan and Auger are right to draw the conclusion that this collection of letters is not merely a scholarly exercise, not just a simple *ethopoieia*.[21] Rightly, they stress the rewriting of the biographical tradition of Euripides, and the theme of the intellectual confronted with a monarch which leads to considerations about the good king. Reflections of this kind are current in the literary production of the high imperial period. These are all good reasons explaining why our author wrote his letters at this time.[22] But there seems to be more to it than that.

III. Euripides as a Success Story, While Plato Fails

Our "epistolary novelette" contains the main narrative techniques which are also found in Plato's "Sicilian novel" (Pl. *Epp.* 1–8):[23] the abrupt beginning *in medias res* (the refusal of the money and the affair of the young people of Pella), gradual revelation, parallel motif chains, explanatory letters (fourth and fifth), and a letter creating a delay (second). Apart from these technical aspects, there also exists a strong thematical relationship between the letters of Plato and the letters of Euripides. Both deal with the theme of an Athenian intellectual confronted with a tyrant, but in an almost

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18 For the text of the γένος, cf. *vit. Eur.* 1–11 (*TrGF* 5.1, Test. A, IA 1–41). For a discussion of its form and its relationship with other biographies of Euripides, cf. Schorn 2004: 26–36.

19 Cf. Hanink 2010: 548–549. Gordon, in this volume (pp. 133–151), with reference to Epicurus, also considers how fictional letters play with and often undermine historical biographical data.

20 For a detailed analysis, cf. Jouan and Auger 1983: 190–194.

21 Jouan and Auger 1983: 191. The motif of *ethopoieia* is in fact not easy to find in this kind of pseudographs, cf. Görgemanns 1997: 1168.

22 Jouan and Auger 1983: 194.

23 As in the case of the letters of Euripides, the name of Plato should not blind us to the fact that these letters are also spurious. On the letters attributed to Plato, see the chapter by Morrison in this volume.

diametrical manner. Holzberg is right to point out the episode of the rejected money in the first letters of both collections: while Plato sends back the money allowed him by Dionysios for his travelling expenses, reproaching its insufficiency (*Ep.* 1, 309c1–6), Euripides refuses the money from Archelaos arguing that he has enough and that the amount is far too much (1.68.1–13 Gösswein).[24] And he is confident that Archelaos will understand his reasons, because he is an intelligent sovereign.[25] But there is more than just an antithetical content: our author underlines this literary allusion with subtle syntactical and stylistical hints. Compare Euripides *Ep.* 1.2–3 τὸ μὲν ἀργύριον ἀνεπέμψαμέν σοι πάλιν, ὅπερ ἡμῖν Ἀμφίας ἐκόμιζεν ("I have sent back the money which Amphias tried to give me") to Plato *Ep.* 309b8–c2 τὸ δὲ χρυσίον τὸ λαμπρόν, ὅπερ ἔδωκας εἰς ἀποστολήν, ἄγει σοι Βακχεῖος ὁ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν φέρων ("The sparkling gold pieces you gave me for the return, Bakcheios brings them back to you with my letter"). Even though the glittering gold coins of Plato (τὸ δὲ χρυσίον τὸ λαμπρόν) became simple money (τὸ μὲν ἀργύριον), there is the same relative clause ὅπερ (with antithetical content: given to make him leave [ἔδωκας] / brought to make him come [ἐκόμιζεν]), while the restitution of the money is expressed with greater emphasis by Euripides (where the edge of the unusual meaning of the verb ἀνεπέμψαμεν is taken off by πάλιν, "backwards").[26] At the same time, the verb ἀνεπέμψαμεν ("I have sent back") ironically echoes the inglorious circumstances in which Plato was sent away (309b4–5): *ἀπεπέμφθην ἀτιμότερον ἢ πτωχὸν ὑμῶν ἀποστελλόντων προσήκει καὶ κελευόντων ἐκπλεῦσαι* ("I was sent back in a more ignoble way than it is befitting to a beggar whom you ordered to leave and sail away").[27] Finally, though the two bearers of the money are named (Ἀμφίας and Βακχεῖος), neither of them is of immediate use to the reader, because they are not linked to the protagonists in a direct way.[28]

The manner in which our author stresses the relation between Euripides' letters and those of Plato invites us to deepen this comparison. After the

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24 Holzberg 1994b: 14. Perhaps the story goes back to Xenocrates, the third conductor of the Platonic Academy of whom it was said that he declined a gift of money from Alexander the Great (cf. Gösswein 1975: 25). Nevertheless, the meaning of "a philosopher can't be purchased" seems to prevail.

25 The historical person of Archelaos, king of Macedonia, was strongly criticized by Plato; see *Gorg.* 470d5–471d2.

26 Cf. Gösswein 1975: 88.

27 Towards the end of the famous seventh letter, the circumstances are explained in greater detail (350a6–b5). Undoubtedly, the presence of the same verb (b4, ἀπέπεμψεν) is not a mere coincidence.

28 See *infra*, § IV.

concentric composition at the beginning (we read 309a1 διατρίψας ἐγὼ παρ' ὑμῖν χρόνον τοσοῦτον / 309b5–6 τοσοῦτον παρ' ὑμῖν διατρίψαντα χρόνον "having spent so much time at your court"), Plato presents a ruler who is abandoned and whose wealth is useless. To illustrate his statement and give it the necessary importance, he cites some verses of tragedy, the first one being from Euripides, whom he mentions by name (309d1–3): καί μοι τὸ τοῦ Εὐριπίδου κατὰ καιρόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν, ὅτι σοὶ πραγμάτων ἄλλων ποτὲ συμπεσόντων 'εὔξῃ τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα σοι παρεστάναι' ("The saying of Euripides seems appropriate to me, i.e. that, in other circumstances, 'you wish to have such a man beside you'").[29] Therefore, the passage in the first letter of Plato forms not only a foil to the motif for the refusal of money given by a tyrant, but it almost also requires a response from "Euripides". And even more so because the same Plato—although this time the historical one—strongly blames Euripides for his friendship with tyrants and had banished him from his ideal state (*Pol.* 568a8–d3).[30] The irony is that Plato himself has failed to win over the Syracusan ruler to his vision of the ideal government, while Euripides is successful, although not effortlessly (5.12–18). There is little surprise, then, that the author of the letters of Euripides chooses the form of a rehabilitation of the Athenian poet.[31] The fourth letter confirms our supposition: Euripides completes the picture of the good ruler with the programmatic statement that power and title, if appropriately used, will not be an impediment to close friendship.

IV. The Characters Mentioned in the Letters and Their Identity: Between Antithetical Intentions and Riddle

Approaching the *corpus* of the letters from Euripides objectively, one will observe that all but the first letter reveal their addressee in the first lines (ὦ Σοφόκλεις, "Dear Sophocles" [2.2]; ὦ βέλτιστε βασιλεῦ, "My dearest king"

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[29] Eur. Fr. 956. This quotation is itself framed by two others: τοιοῦτος ὢν τύραννος οἰκήσεις μόνος (309b7–8 = *trag. adesp.* 346c, "Although you are such a tyrant, you will live alone"), and φίλων ἔρημος, ὦ τάλας, ἀπόλλυμαι (310a1 = *trag. adesp.* 347, "Unfortunate me! I perish without friends").

[30] The verses he quotes for the purpose of his demonstration, and to which he sarcastically concedes good sense are in reality borrowed from Sophocles (Fr. 14 Radt).

[31] It is amusing to note that Dionysios I of Syracuse—i.e. the father of Dionysios II whom Plato attempted to win over for his project of an ideal republic—is said to have used all his influence to acquire, after Euripides' death, the lyre, the tablet and the stylus of the poet in order to devote them all to the Muses (*Hermipp.* fr. 94 Wehrli).

[3.3–4]; ὦ βέλτιστε ᾿Αρχέλαε, "My dearest Archelaos" [4.2]; ὦ βέλτιστε Κηφισοφῶν, "My dearest Cephisophon" [5.2–3]).[32] In the modern editions, we usually find headings like ᾿Αρχελάῳ βασιλεῖ ("to the king Archelaos"), Σοφοκλεῖ ("to Sophocles"), and Κηφισοφῶντι ("to Cephisophon") which are clearly tautological, but a look at the ancient manuscripts confirms that such headings are mostly absent. This not only differs from the epistolary novel of Plato, where the headings correspond to the standard introductory phrases,[33] because he never mentions the addressees again, for example, ὦ βέλτιστε βασιλεῦ ("my dearest king"), but there seems to be more to it: the absence of such headings and therefore the initial uncertainty about the addressee of the letter are part of our author's narrative strategy. The first letter starts abruptly and we are thrown *in medias res*: τὸ μὲν ἀργύριον ἀνεπέμψα*μέν σοι* πάλιν, ὅπερ *ἡμῖν* ᾿Αμφίας ἐκόμιζεν ("I have sent back the money which Amphias tried to give me"). There is a first person (ἀνεπέμψαμεν, ἡμῖν "us", i.e. "me"[34]), who contacts a "you" (σοι), but at this initial phase of the letter, both remain unknown to us. The two persons cited, ᾿Αμφίας (1.3) and Κλείτων (1.9), do not supply us with the writer's and the addressee's identity: there is nothing that links them either to Euripides nor to the Macedonian king, Archelaos.[35] All we learn is that the author of this letter returns money to another person by the hands of a certain Amphias, although Kleiton, apparently a good friend of his who has become the confidant of the "you",[36] presses our writer to keep it.[37] The singular stress which is put on this scene should not have escaped the attentive reader: we have a close parallel in the first letter of Plato. This letter, then, is likely to be the literary model. The second section of our letter corroborates this supposition: the mention of the city of Pella and the request for grace in the affair of two young men on the one hand,

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32 Therefore, the headings we find in most editions (Σοφοκλεῖ, Κηφισοφῶντι, and so on) are tautological. Indeed, a look at the manuscripts confirms that they are lacking. Obviously, our anonymous author did not provide his collection with such headings.

33 E.g. *Ep*. 1: Πλάτων Διονυσίῳ εὖ πράττειν ("Plato wishes Dionysos good health", i.e. "Plato salutes Dionysos").

34 Throughout this letter, the writer uses the plural form.

35 This not only applies to us, but also to the ancient reader, see below.

36 This is confirmed by the last letter.

37 Τὸ μὲν ἀργύριον ἀνεπέμψαμέν σοι πάλιν, ὅπερ ἡμῖν **᾿Αμφίας** ἐκόμιζεν, οὐ δόξαν κενὴν θηρώμενοι, εἰ μή γε καὶ ἀχθεσθήσεσθαί σε μᾶλλον ἢ ἀποδέξεσθαι ἡμᾶς δι' αὐτὸ ἐνομίζομεν […] καὶ **Κλείτων** δὲ ἐπέστειλεν ἡμῖν, ὅπως λάβοιμεν, ἀπειλήσας ὀργιεῖσθαι μὴ λαβοῦσιν κτλ. ("I have sent back the money which Amphias tried to give me, because I am not seeking vain glory, unless I were convinced that your anger about it would be deeper than your understanding for my decision […] Kleiton himself wrote me to accept the money, threatening me with his anger if I should refuse it").

and Athens as the homeland of the writer on the other, suggest that a Macedonian ruler and an Athenian intellectual are on friendly terms. The confirmation that these figures are Archelaos and Euripides appears gradually: first, the addressee of the third letter is said to be a king (ὦ βέλτιστε βασιλεῦ, "My dearest king" [3.3–4]), and his identity is then definitely revealed in the fourth letter (ὦ βέλτιστε Ἀρχέλαε, "My dearest Archelaos" [4.2]).[38] This and the addressee of the fifth letter (ὦ βέλτιστε Κηφισοφῶν, "My dearest Cephisophon" [5.2–3]) make it more than likely that the first-person writer is actually Euripides, though his name does not appear anywhere.[39] Thus the collection of the letters of Euripides is organized as a kind of investigation.

What about the other names? Let us begin with the first two, Amphias and Kleiton. Though the name Amphias is well attested in inscriptions in the Euboian and Attic area in Classical times, and is not unknown in the rest of the Greek mainland and the Cycladic islands,[40] in literary documents it appears first in Thucydides (4.119.2), then in Demosthenes (*in Steph.* 1.8.2.5, where he is a relative of a certain Κηφισοφῶν), and finally, during the period our author was writing, in Plutarch who remembers a Cilician philosopher, Amphias of Tarsos (*Quaest conv.* 2.1.634.c).[41] Κλείτων too was a common name in Athens in the fourth century BC.[42] Literary testimonies come from Xenophon where Socrates talks with a sculptor Kleiton (*Mem.* 3.10.6–8);[43] then, the name appears in literary epigrams (*Anth. Graec.* 6.226, 239), before Diodorus Siculus mentions a Kleiton from Macedon (17.82) who won the stadium race of the 113th Olympic Games (328–24 BC). As far as we can tell, neither of them is linked to Euripides. And even if for obvious reasons we have to concentrate on the literary testimonies—since our author lives and writes in the second century AD—borrowings from Demosthenes (Amphias the relative of Κηφισοφῶν) or from Diodorus Siculus (Kleiton from Macedon) are possible (these might be literary jokes). Nevertheless, that suggestion remains a speculation. The main intention of our author, undoubtedly, is to suggest that he knows things about the addressees of which we are

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38 The mention of the city of Pella in the first letter is a hint for the identification of the unknown ruler, since Archelaos lived there; cf. Badian 1996: 985.

39 Indeed, Aristophanes repeatedly links Euripides with a man called Cephisophon (*Ran.* 944, 1452–1453, Fr. 594 K.-A.).

40 Cf. Chardonnet 1984: 49–50 and n. 3.

41 In the following lines, Plutarch mentions Agathon's departure to Macedon, and then he alludes to a comedy of Cratinus.

42 Cf. Fraser and Matthews 1994: 264–265.

43 Cf. O'Sullivan 2008: 182.

ignorant. This seems particularly true of the people he names in the letter to Sophocles. For an intellectual of the Second Sophistic, the names of Chionides and Cratinus would have evoked the well-known poets of Old Comedy,[44] contemporaneous with Sophocles, while Leoprepes[45] could have been identified with the father of the ancient Greek lyric poet Simonides. Besides, Antigenes is much too common in all epochs and literary genres as to permit the identification with a well-known physician. When, in the fifth letter, the slanderers of Euripides are said to be Agathon and Mesatos, the immediate identification with the famous tragic poets of the fifth century BC seems to be more than simply a guess, particularly since Agathon is linked with Euripides by Aristophanes (*Thesm.*).[46] These literary games add to the reader's enjoyment, but do not necessarily provide us with clear historical information about the letters' writers or addressees.

V. The Letter Addressed to Sophocles: A Mere Trick of Delay?

In the second letter, addressed to Sophocles, the writer was delighted that the Athenian poet survived the shipwreck while he was sailing to Chios,[47] and he assures Sophocles that he need not worry about his private affairs at home, for he himself is taking care of them. This letter then is doubly unexpected: it not only changes radically the subject (Euripides' relation with money and a king), but it makes us understand that Euripides and Sophocles have become close friends! This seems to mar the unity of the rest of our collection of letters, persuading Gösswein to consider the letter to be

44 See above, n. 41.

45 The Hellenistic spelling Λα- instead of Λεω- is remarkable.

46 Satyros (*vit. Eur.* fr. 39 col. 15.26–34, Schorn 2004: 106) gives four names of contemporary poets: ἅμα δὲ ἀχθόμενος ἐπὶ τῶι συννέμεσθαι πολλ[ά]κις ᾿Ακέστο[ρι κ]αὶ Δοριλάωι [καὶ] Μορσίμωι [καὶ] Μελανθίωι ("At the same time, he was vexed at being often associated with Acestor, Dorilaos, Morsimos and Melanthios"; cf. the commentary, 313–314). Not surprisingly, our writer does not take into consideration any of them: he is just interessed in drawing an antithetical Euripides. Perhaps we have to turn to Plato: from the three slanderers of Socrates (*Apol.* 23e: Anytos, Meletos and Lykon), only the first two are considered worthy of being replied to (from *Apol.* 28a onwards). If we combine them with the two poets mentioned in the letters of Euripides, we get the following equation: **A**nytos / **A**gathon and **Me**le**tos** / **Me**sa**tos** (all of three syllables). This could be more than just coincidence.

47 The shipwreck of a poet is a literary *topos*, cf. *vit. Terenti* 5 and Gösswein 1975: 26. Prop. 3.7.1–12 combines shipwreck with greed for money. There might even be a bit of irony: poetry of the Augustian age uses the navigation as a metaphor for poetic work (cf. Holzberg 2006: 65).

a later addition.[48] According to Holzberg, however, in the field of the epistolary novel, letters whose main function is to delay the main plot are quite common. This seems to be particularly true of our second letter: it is situated between the request for the liberation of the young men imprisoned in Pella (letter 1) and their final liberation and arrival in Athens (letter 3).[49] But the manner in which our author proceeds distinguishes him from the author of Plato's "Sicilian novel". By presenting the two Athenian tragic poets as good friends, although in reality they remained greatly respectful rivals until their death,[50] our writer not only succeeds in surprising us but he also prepares us for the final reflections in the last letter about Euripides' personal evolution to a really wise man. Once more, a letter which, at first sight, serves a mere narrative purpose, turns out to play an important role in the construction of the antithetical Euripides.[51]

VI. Conclusions

The five letters of Euripides are part of a literary genre which is particularly popular in the Second Sophistic. It consists of a certain number of collections of pseudographic letters in Greek attributed to famous people from different times, even if they were mostly from the Classical period. This clearly applies to our collection, which is doubtless complete, and which seems to have been written by the same hand throughout.[52] As to the dating, the linguistic analysis and the subject matter point clearly to the late second or early third century AD.[53] This has made some scholars consider them to be mere examples of *ethopoieia*. Some prefer to recognise the main structure in the letters as that of an epistolary novel, while others give special emphasis of the author's apologetic intention.[54] They are all partially right;

48 Gösswein 1975: 20–22.

49 Holzberg 1994b: 16.

50 At the announcement of Euripides' death, Sophocles is said to have wrapped himself up in a dark coat, and to have led the unwreathed choir into the theatre (*vit. Eur.* 11 [*TrGF* 5.1, Test. A, IA 39–41]).

51 Cf. Hanink 2010: 549–551.

52 Richard Bentley 1697: 114–115 is completely mistaken, when he claims: "There are only five Epistles now extant, ascribed to Euripides: but without doubt there were formerly more of them; as we have seen just before, that we have not now the whole sett of Xenophon's Letters. Neither can we suppose a Sophist of so barren an invention, as to have his fancy quite cramp'd and jaded with poor five."

53 For the whole question, cf. Jouan and Auger 1983.

54 For an epistolary novel, cf. Holzberg 1994b *passim*; the apologetic character of the collection is stressed by Hanink 2010: n. 54.

our letters include all these aspects.[55] However, an essential point has been overlooked: the author of these pseudographic epistles clearly stresses the comparison with Plato's "Sicilian novel" which serves, from the very beginning, as a contrasting background to Euripides' successful experience with a tyrant. He reveals himself as being an anti-Plato, as being someone who has acquired good relations with the Macedonian ruler. In contrast with Plato, Euripides initially remains in Athens, rejecting all the efforts of Archesilaos to bribe him with money. Nevertheless, he finally moves to Pella in the role of a wise man: the king is clearly receptive to good advice.[56] This external frame is completed by the artful connections of other motifs like wealth, virtues of a good ruler, and the Athenians regarding Euripides with envy. All the same, his abandoning Athens is not merely him running away from the continous slanders of his fellow citizens, but an exciting challenge in his life. We have come full circle.

A second framework, embeded in the first, delineates a poet who has developed from being the rival of Sophocles into being his friend. This is the only evolution of our protagonist who has otherwise "been constant both in his habits [...] and with respect to his friends and enemies".[57] Thus we take part, through these letters, in a crucial moment of Euripides' life, i.e. in his decision to leave Athens and join the court of Pella.

Last but not least, the way the reader has to uncover the (supposed) identity of the writer and his main addressee (the Macedonian ruler Archelaos) reveals that the purpose of the collection is principally to provide entertainment, though it is not without any educational purpose.[58] Therefore, the unknown author has chosen the form of the epistolary novel, even if it remains the most basic. The author's intention was clearly not novelistic, but the presentation of a "new" Euripides as the anti-Plato and as antithetically opposed to the major ancient biographical sources. Thus, the answer to the letters of Plato—which themselves are not the best example of an epistolary novel insofar as they revolve around the famous Seventh Letter containing the so-called unwritten doctrine—is formally confined to the

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[55] Nevertheless, in the present "novelette", there is much less action than in the other collections which Holzberg places under the heading of "epistolary novel".

[56] Hanink 2010: 543 rightly stresses this new role of Euripides and its contribution to the transmission of these letters since antiquity.

[57] Hanink 2010: 549.

[58] Görgemanns 1997: 1168 calls it an "unterhaltsam-bildenden Lesestoff". Cf. also Malosse 2005: 66 who makes the point that our author provides "de temps en temps un signe de connivence au lecteur."

essential: opening in *medias res*, delay, explanatory letter(s). This seems a necessary concession for an author of the Second Sophistic who wants to resuscitate great persons of the Classical period (mostly philosophers and historians) by giving new and/or corrected insights.

PART II

INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION IN EPISTOLARY NARRATIVES

A. *Epistolarity and Other Narrative Forms: Generic Hybridity*

ADDRESSING POWER: FICTIONAL LETTERS BETWEEN ALEXANDER AND DARIUS

Tim Whitmarsh

How does epistolography correspond to (or with) narrative fiction? The huge surge of critical interest in epistolary fiction (as form, cultural praxis, vehicle for revolutionary ideology, or mimicry of gender roles) has lent it a central role in modern discussions of the formation of the European novel, particularly as a driver of all that is bourgeois, literate, kinetic, feminine, dialogic, sexual, and self-reflexive.[1] The European novel, as is well known, grew up at a time when the materialities of literary practice were evolving rapidly: not just printing (which Benjamin in particular saw as instrumental in the spread of the novel) but also the emergence of the popular press, leafleting and pamphleting, and—notably—postal services open to private individuals; in other words, at a time when new ideas were being aired about the making, addressing, sending, receiving, and interrupting of intimate, self-author(is)ed or samizdat text. If the hallmarks of the modern novel are intrigue, a transgressive prurience, the illicit *circulation* of both discourse and identities, then much of this energy is common to the new technologies of correspondence.

Yet letters are also, from a different perspective, decidedly non-fictional: documentary, often interpersonal rather than designed for publication, "real", or at least mimicries of the real. They occupy a different sociocultural space to that of literature, in that their generic conventions (for writers and readers alike) rest on the presumption of directness and intimacy. "A letter should be very largely an expression of character", writes the author of an ancient literary manual; "perhaps every one reflects his own soul in writing a letter".[2] This kind of comment, which is widespread both in antiquity and later, should not be confused with naive realism, embedded as it is in this case within a prescriptive discussion of the proper style that one should adopt in epistolography (style, after all, is designed, taught, habituated,

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[1] Altman 1982, a formalist approach to epistolarity as literature, initiated the vogue. See also Kauffman 1986, 1992; MacArthur 1990; Favret 1993; Watson 1994; Alliston 1996; Cook 1996; Zaczek 1997; Versini 1998; Beebee 1999; and Bray 2003.

[2] Ps.-Demetrius *On Style* 227, trans. Russell-Winterbottom.

non-natural). What it points to instead is a sense that the best letter disavows its own literariness: it "mimics the effect of improvisation".[3] This is the "affectation of simplicity which covers the writer's rhetoric" that Derrida detects already in Isocrates' letters, and emulates in his own pseudepistolographic *The postcard*.[4] Letters tend to shuttle back and forth over the boundary separating the artful from the ingenuous, the constructed from the sincere.[5]

It is this paradoxical status of the letter, hovering between categories, that has driven much of the recent critical interest in the epistolary novel alluded to above. In romanticism, we read, the "letter [...] hints at a correspondence between public and private experience, and that correspondence continually revises—and disrupts—fixed images of narratives".[6] Or again, in terms of gender, the fictional letter represents "the masculine 'posing' as feminine in order to be 'posted/positioned' within a fixed system of public circulation and exchange".[7] Letters *both* embody the novelistic fiction of access to a hidden world *and* deconstruct it by exposing its very fictionality.[8]

In antiquity too the letter is there at the very origins of fiction. A number of studies, both within this volume and beyond, have pointed to the emergence in the Hellenistic period of fictional letter collections relating to Themistocles, Hippocrates, Euripides, and others, to the epistolary *Chion of Heraclea*, and to the central role of epistolarity in the later Greek ideal romance, particularly Chariton.[9] We cannot pinpoint particular Hellenistic transformations in print technology (or redefinition of the private sphere, or revolutionary fervour) to explain these processes, but it is clear (not least from Oxyrhynchus)[10] that the letter assumed in the Hellenistic and Roman periods a position of centrality at every level of society, in a world that was increasingly both literate and subject to remote governance and legislation, and in which kin, friends, and lovers were increasingly likely to be separated by work or misadventure. I shall return in conclusion to the "textual energy" of the post-classical period.

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[3] μιμεῖται αὐτοσχεδιάζοντα, 224, trans. Russell-Winterbottom.

[4] Derrida 1987: 92.

[5] See the Introduction to this volume (pp. 1–36), especially "A Narratology of Letters".

[6] Favret 1993: 9.

[7] Favret 1993: 14.

[8] As the editors note in the Introduction, "there is something about epistolary form which encourages self-conscious fiction and a high metaliterary content" (above, p. 18); see also Hodkinson (below, pp. 340–342).

[9] Rosenmeyer 2001 is comprehensive and standard; see further the Introduction to this volume.

[10] For a thoughtful survey, see Hutchinson 2007.

This chapter considers what may be our very earliest example of a Greek 'novel' (however we choose to define that slippery term), the *Alexander Romance*. The misleading singular title 'romance' in fact covers a complex textual tradition extending into five multilingual manuscript families, each of which contains interwoven material from a variety of dates.[11] To make matters more complex, the text is conventionally taken to have originally been patched together from several different pre-existing literary fabrics: a narrative *vita* detailing Alexander's journey, a collection of letters exchanged between Alexander and Darius (and various other figures), a dialogue with the Brahmans, and various other smaller sections.[12] Despite the evident difficulties involved in stratifying a text like this, it seems likely that the earliest elements date to the Ptolemaic period, perhaps even early in that period.[13] This would indeed make it (caveats conceded) our earliest surviving work of prose fiction from Greek antiquity, with the arguable exception of Xenophon's *Cyropedia*.[14]

I. A Fluid Tradition

The epistolary core of the *Romance* centres on three sets of exchanges: between Alexander and Darius (5–8, 11–12, 14–16), between Darius and Porus (18–19), Alexander and Porus (32–34), and Alexander and the Amazons (35–38).[15] Interwoven with this are two other narrative strands: one relating commanders (both Darius and Alexander) to women and family life (10 + 24,[16] 13, 20, 26–27, 29–31), and one relating them to commanders, satraps and subjugated cities. At the heart of the epistolary sequence lies the exchange between Alexander and Darius (and their various subordinates), the key players in the military and political events.[17] Every single letter bar one (28) involves at least one of these two, and while Darius is alive almost half (10 out of approximately 24)[18] involve both. It is likely, I think, that the 'epistolary

11 For a recent account, see Stoneman 2007: lxxiii–lxxxiii.

12 Stoneman 2007: xliii–xlviii.

13 The arguments are reviewed at Stoneman 2007: xxviii–xxxiv, where a Hellenistic date for the earliest stratum is defended.

14 For a discussion of epistolarity in Xenophon, see Gera's chapter in this volume.

15 To avoid cluttering the page, I use Merkelbach's numeration for the letters, which will be explained below; the following table can be used as a concordance.

16 I.e. the single letter in the *Romance* that Merkelbach bisects.

17 Discussed by Rosenmeyer 2001: 177–184.

18 Absolute certainty is impossible because (as will be discussed presently) the letters do not respect any authoritative external chronology.

novel' on which the *Romance* draws focused on these two figures. Certainly it is in their relationship that we see the most sustained and dynamic characterisation.[19] What is more, the two epistolary papyri that we have relating to the tradition focus exclusively on Alexander, Darius, and their underlings.

Most of my discussion will be devoted to reading this exchange between the two rulers as a sophisticated and vibrant expression of a culture exuberantly obsessed with dynamic modes of textuality, as well as with the themes of kingship and cultural identity. Before we get there, however, let us briefly consider the nature of these letters and the way in which they have been transmitted. This discussion will serve partly to introduce this recondite material to those unfamiliar with it, and partly to foreground some of the attendant critical problems; but more importantly, as we shall see in due course, issues of interpretation cannot be isolated from issues of transmission. Letters always insist on their own materiality, and on the practicalities of circulation, within both the fictional and the philological worlds.

The epistolary exchange is distributed throughout the *Romance* (full details in the table below).[20] Scholars since Merkelbach have generally assumed that these letters have been imported into the narrative from an original epistolary novel, on the basis primarily of the two fragmentary papyri mentioned above, which seem to be from epistolary collections. The first (*PSI* 1285) contains an exchange between Darius and Alexander (and, in one case, between Polyidus (apparently the fourth-century tragedian) and Darius): five letters in total, the last two of which reappear at *Romance* 2.10. The second (*PHamb.* 605) contains six letters, four relating to Alexander, two of which are also found in the *Romance* (1.39, 2.17).[21] On this basis, Merkelbach reconstructed and published a *Briefroman* of 38 letters (some of which are primarily hypothesised on the basis of extant letters that seem to be responses),[22] which can be tabulated as follows:

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19 This is not to deny that the Porus and Amazon exchanges work as a continuation of the narrative sequence. Porus functions as an after-echo of the now-dead Darius, who has (letters 18–19) primed him to treat Alexander with hostility. The Amazons are more interesting: they seem as if they too will play the role of aggressive, barbarian other (they refer to themselves as 'the most powerful leaders among the Amazons' (Ἀμαζόνων αἱ κράτισται καὶ ἡγούμεναι, 38))–but end up being compliant and welcoming Alexander, in pointed contrast to Darius and Porus. These exchanges are however too brief to allow the kind of detailed narrative reading I propose below.

20 I do not include in this discussion the 'marvel letters' to his mother, conventionally assumed to come from a different epistolary tradition (2.24–41, 3.27–29).

21 Merkelbach 1947, 1954. The remaining letters are from Hannibal to the Athenians, and from Philip to the Spartans. The fourth letter, however, has some elements in common with *Romance* 3.2.

22 Merkelbach 1977: 230–252.

'Brief-roman'	*Romance*	*PHamb*	*PFlor*	Contents
1	1.39.7			Satraps to Darius
2	1.39.3–5	No. 1*		Darius to satraps
3	2.10.4–5			Satraps to Darius
4	1.39.8–9			Darius to satraps
5	1.36.2–5			Darius to Alexander
6	1.38.2–7			Alexander to Darius
7	1.40.2–5			Darius to Alexander
8		No. 3		Darius to Alexander
9				[Missing letter] from Darius to Alexander
10	2.23 (β)			Alexander to Olympias
11	2.17.2–4*	No. 2		Darius to Alexander
12			No. 1	Darius to Alexander
13			No. 2	Polyidus to Darius
14			No. 3	Alexander to Darius
15	2.10.6–8*		No. 4	Darius to Alexander
16	2.10.9–10		No. 5*	Alexander to Darius
17	1.42.1–3			Darius and Alexander to commanders
18	2.19.2–5			Darius to Porus
19	2.12.1–2			Porus to Darius
20	2.12.3–5			Rhodogyne to Darius
21	2.11.2–3			Alexander to satraps
22	2.11.4–5			Satrap to Darius
23	2.11.6–7			Darius to generals
24	2.23 (β)			Alexander to Olympias
25	2.21.3–21			Alexander to Persian cities
26	2.22.2–6			Alexander to Stateira and Rhodogyne
27	2.22.7–10			Stateira and Rhodogyne to Alexander
28	2.22.11			Stateira and Rhodogyne to Persian *ethnos*
29	2.22.12			Alexander to Stateira and Rhodogyne
30	2.22.13			Alexander to Olympias
31	2.22.14–16			Alexander to Roxane
32	3.2.2–5			Porus to Alexander
33	3.2.8–11			Alexander to Porus
34		No. 4		Porus to Alexander
35	3.25.3–4			Alexander to Amazons
36	3.25.5–11			Amazons to Alexander
37	3.26.1–14			Alexander to Amazons
38	3.26.5–7			Amazons to Alexander

* = partial

Merkelbach's *Brieffroman* is, at one level, a *Quellenforscher*'s fantasy. For a start, it depends upon a hypothesis that the Florence papyrus, or some

similar text, is primary, and has then been inexpertly filleted by the author of the *Romance*. A key prop in this argument is the belief that the 'original' epistolary text was consistent with the historical chronology of Alexander's travels: this is clearly a questionable enough assumption in itself (when has fiction ever respected history?), but the theory also faces the additional problem that there is no possible explanation, beyond incompetence, why the author or authors of the *Romance* might have disturbed the sequence so violently. It is true that in the *Romance* sequence there is one letter ('*Brieforman*' 19 = *Alex. Rom.* 2.12.1–2) that looks as if it might respond to a letter that comes later (18 = 2.19.2–5), which would of course imply chronological dislocation, but in fact this is not a necessary conclusion; the letters also make perfect sense in their existing places in the *Romance*. More importantly, the quest for a chronologically accurate *Briefroman* does serious violence to the transmitted text. The most striking example is his letter 10 (= 2.23, only in the β tradition of the *Romance*), from Alexander to his mother Olympias: he reports his success at the battle of Issus, his foundation of two cities, and the capture and death of the wounded Darius. Now, in the *Romance* chronology this letter makes perfect sense, since we have just been told that Darius has died. Merkelbach, however, is vexed by the historical inconvenience that Darius did not actually die after Issus, so he cuts letter 10 in half. The part about Issus and the foundations he inserts at this point in the narrative, but the section about the death of Darius now becomes a new letter, number 24. This is clearly a desperate expedient.

There is one more major problem with the hypothetical *Briefroman*. The Getty Museum houses a relief dating to the early years of Tiberius (*SEG* 33.802). In 1989 Stanley Burnstein published an identification of four fragmentary lines on the reverse: three come from the letter of Darius to Alexander found only in the Hamburg papyrus, and the fourth (which translates as "when this letter arrived ...") shows that the letter was, or at least could be, embedded in a larger narrative.[23] This, of course, undermines Merkelbach's argument that the author of the *Alexander Romance* was an incompetent writing in around AD 200 who found a collection of letters and took the decisive step of dropping them into a preexisiting narrative; in the first century, clearly, there was already was in existence at least one Alexander epistle set into a narrative framework, a framework, moreover, that was not the *Romance* as we have it. An additional complexity is that the Getty inscription (which is fragmentary) contains the same words as the Hamburg

23 Burnstein 1989.

papyrus, but the space available in the lacunae is insufficient to house the whole text found on the Hamburg papyrus. In other words, we are dealing (as, to his credit, Merkelbach conceded in his response to Burnstein)[24] with a multimedia matrix of textual variants, a 'text network',[25] rather than an originally pristine *Briefroman* thereafter debased in the *Romance*.

Let me make two points at this stage. The first is just to emphasise the obvious need for caution. Alexander letters obviously circulated in multiple different forms, both in anthologies (as the Hamburg and Florence papyri show) and embedded in narratives (as the *Romance* and the Getty relief show). Any conclusions that we draw as to the relationship between these letters and their narrative contexts need, then, to be both provisional and local. The second point, however, is more constructive. That these letters are reshuffled so often, like the cards in a croupier's pack, is surely due to more than the adventures of transmission. It seems to point instead to an intrinsic feature of epistolarity in the Alexander tradition: like real letters, these can be intercepted and rerouted. There seems to be a constant slippage with letters between content and the material form that conveys it, both within the fictional work and—in this case at least—in the very processes of transmission. The fluidity of this epistolary series is another manifestation of the tense and ambiguous relationship between letters and narrative that we saw at the outset of this chapter: the Alexander letters seem simultaneously integral to the *Romance* tradition (in that they are fully naturalised in their narrative contexts) *and* capable of independent organic existence.

I want to turn now to what may seem an unorthodox reading of the Alexander letters, which will reflect both the letters' seemingly constant process of coupling with and uncoupling from narrative, and the unusually protean nature of the collection. What I propose to do is to read the assemblage of Alexander-Darius letters, from a variety of sources, as a (stochastic) unity, even though there is no evidence that they were ever united in this way in a single text. This is not, however, simply a return to the idea of a single, originary *Briefroman*. The central difference is that the reading pursued here will avoid enforcing an arbitrary concept of structure, emphasising instead the multiple possibilities for combination and recombination. If epistolarity's cathection of narrative totality—its very own *objet petit a*–is always fantasmatic, it is exceptionally so in this case.

24 Merkelbach 1989.
25 Selden 2010.

II. Defining the Terms

The exchanges between Alexander and Darius centre on the attempts of both to capture linguistically and conceptually the relationship between the two. When Alexander first invades, Darius seeks to paint Alexander as an impish child who should submit to his superiors. Let us begin with his letter to his satraps, number 2 in Merkelbach's scheme:

> ὑμεῖς οὖν συλλαβόντες αὐτὸν ἀγάγετέ μοι μηδὲν ἐργασάμενοι κακὸν τῷ ἐκείνου σώματι. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκδύσας αὐτὸν τὴν πορφύραν καὶ πληγὰς δοὺς ἀποστελῶ αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ πατρίδα Μακεδονίαν πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ μητέρα Ὀλυμπιάδα, δοὺς κρόταλα καὶ ἀστραγάλους, οἷς Μακεδόνων παῖδες παίζουσι, καὶ συναποστελῶ αὐτῷ ἄνδρα Πέρσην παιδαγωγὸν σωφροσύνης διδάσκαλον σκῦτος ἔχοντα, ὃς οὐκ ἐπιτρέψει αὐτῷ ἀνδρὸς φρόνημα ἔχειν πρὸ τοῦ ἄνδρα γενέσθαι.
>
> Arrest him and bring him to me, without doing any physical harm, so that I can strip him of the purple and flog him before sending him back to his homeland, Macedonia, to his mother, Olympias, with a rattle and a dice (which is how Macedonian children play). And I shall send with him a pedagogue with a whip to teach him self-control, who will encourage him to have a man's sense before he becomes a man himself.[26] (Letter 2)

Particularly notable is Darius' attempt to define the relationship between himself and Alexander in terms of authority. Alexander is infantilised, as he is in another letter (no. 5, earlier in the *Romance* but later in Merkelbach's scheme); Darius by contrast is a teacher, who will teach his charge a lesson (παιδαγωγὸν [...] διδάσκαλον). This is a complex metanarrative moment. The learning of lessons implies a temporal sequence of transgression and restitution, decisively resolved into a clear moral closure. The narrative of Alexander's learning of "self-control" (*sōphrosynē*) and "sense" (*phronēma*) would suggest that his aggression against Darius betokened the absence of these qualities. Yet there is clearly a deep irony working against Darius' words, since the very framework that he creates can and will be redeployed to evaluate him (an inevitability, given the Herodotean resonances discussed above). At this relatively early stage in the narrative, then, readers are thus required to judge between competing models for anticipating and morally assessing the impending events. Here we see a strong example of the perspectival relativity that epistolary narrative creates.

Indeed, at the same time that the character Darius seeks to control the representation of Alexander, Greek readers will be aware of a textual strategy

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[26] Translations of the *Romance* letters adapted from Dowden 1989; all others are mine.

defining Darius himself in relation to a tralatitious image of Persian kingship. Darius' overweening pride, manifesting itself in his threats towards Alexander's person (a repeated feature of these exchanges), links with the tradition of arrogant Persians dismissive of Greek power that stretches back to Herodotus' take on the ethics of power (while no doubt also reflecting current discussions of the ethics of power within Hellenistic kingship theory). Homonymy underpins intertextuality: the fourth-century Darius III plays the role of Herodotus' Darius I, and more pertinently his son Xerxes.

It is one of the features of epistolography that it is an active, energetic, kinetic form of writing: letters do not simply describe a state of affairs; they also prescribe, or (in cases like this, where the writing character's intention is subverted in the reader's eyes) *seek* to prescribe, a way of looking at the world. The exchange between Darius and Alexander rests precisely upon this idea. Their letters represent competing, and indeed fundamentally conflicting, ways of construing their relationship. Darius begins by lording it over Alexander; we see in Alexander's responses to Darius' self-aggrandising a set of refusals to adopt the terms set up by Darius, and conversely attempts to establish a different modality of relationship. Take Darius' adoption of titulature in letter 5, and Alexander's creative response in the following letter (which follows in the *Romance* as well as in Merkelbach's scheme):

> (Darius:) Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ θεῶν συγγενὴς σύνθρονός τε θεῷ Μίθρᾳ καὶ συνανατέλλων ἡλίῳ, ἐγὼ αὐτὸς θεὸς Δαρεῖος Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐμῷ θεράποντι τάδε προστάσσω καὶ κελεύω …
>
> King of kings, kinsman of the gods, throne-sharer with Mithras, I who rise to heaven with the Sun, a god myself, I Darius to my servant Alexander give these orders … (Letter 5)

> (Alexander:) Βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος πατρὸς Φιλίππου καὶ μητρὸς Ὀλυμπιάδος βασιλεῖ βασιλέων καὶ συνθρόνῳ θεοῦ Μίθρου καὶ ἐκγόνῳ θεῶν καὶ συνανατέλλοντι ἡλίῳ μεγάλῳ θεῷ βασιλεῖ Περσῶν Δαρείῳ χαίρειν.
>
> King Alexander, son of Philip and Olympias, to Darius, king of kings, throne-sharer with divine Mithras, descendant of the gods, who rise to heaven with the Sun, great god, king of the Persians: greetings. (Letter 6)

Alexander mimics back to his addressee all the titles that were used in the original letter, but subverts them by styling himself only "King Alexander son of Philip and Olympias". No claims to immortality here; the juxtaposition of grandeur and humility produces an effect of comic bathos. Quotation reframes meaning; recontextualisation parodies, in the way that (for example) Aristophanes parodies Euripides through citation. The epistolary

exchange depends on a process of negotiation and renegotiation of cognitive contracts.

There are numerous parallels for this process of competitive redefinition. Rosenmeyer points to one: Darius sends Alexander gifts of a whip, a ball and some gold, which he intends to symbolise Alexander's punishment, his youthfulness, and his need to pay his troops on their impending retreat; Alexander responds creatively, explicitly "reinterpreting" (Rosenmeyer's word) these, to refer to the whipping he will give the Persians, his likely conquest of the world (the ball), and the tribute he will exact (the gold).[27] These gifts can thus be seen to embody the fluctuations of meaning that occur in the epistolary exchange.

A subtler example concerns, once again, names and titles. The word "great" (*megas*) recurs repeatedly in these exchanges. It forms part of Darius' titulature, and most of the time when he writes to people or is written to he is the 'great king'. Alexander, however, presents greatness as something that can be acquired through competition: "If I beat you", he writes, "I shall become famous and a great (*megas*) king among the barbarians and Greeks" (ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ἐὰν σε ἡττήσω, περίφημος ἔσομαι καὶ μέγας βασιλεὺς παρὰ βαρβάροις καὶ Ἕλλησιν, Letter 6). His success against Darius, indeed, guarantees his inevitable acquisition of the surname 'the Great', which is affirmed by Darius' subsequent address to him as "my great master" (τῷ ἐμῷ μεγάλῳ δεσπότῃ, Letter 11). Here we have Darius forced, in defeat, to accept the terms of the relationship initially vied for in the epistolary exchange. There is, however, an additional twist, in that Darius writes to Alexander, after his defeat, warning him not to *megalophronein*: "be arrogant", or literally "think *megas*" (Letters 11, 12). Darius seems to be trying to claw back some of the status he has lost in acknowledging Alexander's 'greatness', by advising him that being great and thinking great are not the same thing. Or, put differently, he is attempting to reestablish some of the authority he has lost in the initial competition over the word *megas*, by offering a new perspective on it, this time from a psychoethical perspective. Like the whip, ball and gold, the word *megas* is subject to creative redefinition through the medium of the letter.

[27] Rosenmeyer 2001: 177–180, at 179.

III. Negotiating Status

The epistolary negotiation between Alexander and Darius is, for readers, overdetermined by the inevitability of the latter's defeat, guaranteed by our awareness of both history and the quasi-Herodotean genre of the narrative of eastern kingship (arrogant eastern kings must come a cropper). This *peripeteia* is, once again, enacted through the language, and particularly through the shifting discourse of immortality. In the letters before his defeat Darius adopts self-divinising titles, and demeans Alexander: "King of kings, kinsman of the gods, I who rise to heaven with the Sun, a god myself (θεῶν συγγενὴς σύνθρονός τε θεῷ Μίθρᾳ καὶ συνανατέλλων ἡλίῳ, ἐγὼ αὐτὸς θεός), I Darius to my servant Alexander give these orders ..." (Letter 5).[28] Alexander objects vociferously to the self-arrogation of these titles:

> αἰσχρόν ἐστι τὸν τηλικοῦτον βασιλέα Δαρεῖον καὶ τηλικαύτῃ δυνάμει ἐπαιρόμενον, ὄντα δὲ καὶ σύνθρονον τῶν θεῶν ὑπὸ ταπεινὴν δουλείαν πεσεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ τινί ποτε Ἀλεξάνδρῳ. αἱ γὰρ τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασίαι εἰς ἀνθρώπους χωροῦσαι οὐ μεγάλην δύναμιν ἢ φρόνησιν παρέχουσιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀγανάκτησιν,[29] ὅτι εἰς φθαρτὰ σώματα ἀθανάτων ὀνόματα κατοικεῖ. ὥστε κατεγνώσθης ἤδη παρ' ἐμοῦ ὡς μηδὲν δυνάμενος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασίαις ἑαυτὸν περικοσμῶν καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων οὐρανίας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ γῆς σεαυτῷ περιτιθείς. ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔρχομαι πρός σε ὡς πρὸς θνητὸν θνητὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ὤν· ἡ δὲ ῥοπὴ τῆς νίκης ἐκ τῆς ἄνω προνοίας γίνεται.
>
> It is a disgrace if Darius, such a king, priding himself on such power, who shares a throne with the gods, should falls into base slavery to a human being, Alexander. The titles of the gods, when they come into the possession of men, do not confer great power or sense upon them, rather they aggravate the gods, since the names of the immortals have taken up residence in destructible bodies. As a result you are in my eyes convicted of having no power; rather, you adorn yourself with the titles of the gods and attribute their powers on earth to yourself. I am waging war on you mortal to mortal; whichever way victory goes depends on Providence above. (Letter 6)

This letter flatly refuses the contractual relationship of immortal-mortal that Darius proposed in the letter to which (both in the *Romance* and in Merkelbach's scheme) it responds: it promises to engage with Darius not *qua* god, but mortal to mortal (πρὸς θνητὸν θνητός). More than this, however, it refers self-reflexively to the praxis of naming, of *onomasia* (*bis*). It does more than simply deny Darius' divinity; it denaturalises it, drawing attention to

[28] His divinity is a theme in letter 7 too, but in letter 8 I see no need for Merkelbach's supplement βασιλεὺς βασιλέων θεὸς μέγας.

[29] Kroll; ἀγανακτήσουσιν ⟨οἱ θεοί⟩ Merkelbach, Stoneman.

the transgressive cultural processes involved in describing a human as a god. This letter asks us to think about the illocutionary power of letters, which do not simply relay content, but also (seek to) prescribe the relationship between writer and addressee.

When Darius accepts defeat, conversely, generic logic suggests that he should concede his own mortality. This is indeed what he does, but it is not quite a capitulation; rather, he seeks to renegotiate their relationship. Adopting an authoritative tone (note the imperative and the instructional use of parables), he writes:

> πρῶτον μὲν γίνωσκε ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἔ[φυς]· ἵκανον ὑπόμνημα [τόδε τοῦ] σὲ μὴ μεγαλοφρονεῖν. καὶ γὰρ Ξέρξης ὁ τὸ φῶς μοι δοὺς ὑπερφρονήσας καὶ καταφρονήσας πάντων ἀνθρώπων μέγαν ἔρωτα ἔσχεν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα στρατεῦσαι ἄπληστος ὢν χρυσοῦ τε καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ τῆς λοιπῆς εὐδαιμοσύνης ἥτις ὑπῆρχεν διὰ πατέρων· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἀπῆλθεν ἀπόλεσας πολὺν στρατὸν καὶ σκηνὰς χρυ[σοῦ] τε καὶ ἀργύρο[υ καὶ] ἐσθή[των].
>
> First of all, realise that you are mortal; this should be enough of a reminder that you should avoid arrogance. For Xerxes, who showed me the light, was overweening and held all humanity in contempt, and conceived a great desire to march against Greece, unsatisfied with the gold and silver and the rest of the wealth that he had inherited; but nevertheless he came away without his huge army and tents full of gold, silver and clothing. (Letter 11)

This letter adds another twist: the narrative has not, as we may have been led to believe, been straightforwardly resolved when the arrogance of the barbarian king is punished. Having learned from experience the mutability of fortune, Darius now, Croesus-like, applies this very lesson to Alexander. Darius here suggests a new framework for the narrative to follow, whereby Alexander's failure to return home and to consolidate his empire is to be understood as a function of the same excess and lack of self-awareness that did for Darius. The epistolary mode, however, leaves readers uncertain as to how much authority to grant this framework. *Is* this the best way to understand Alexander? Has Darius grasped something essential about the impermanence of human power? Certainly the reference to the "reminder" (ὑπόμνημα) seems a self-conscious allusion to literary memory, and particularly to Herodotus (the principal source both for the Xerxes narrative and for the theme of the instability of power).[30] But could this not instead be mostly a case of a defeated king trying to exert some moral leverage in his position of abjection? Darius, on this reading, would not be simply capitulating, but

[30] For a discussion of epistolarity in Herodotus, see Bowie's chapter in this volume.

attempting once again to redefine the relationship in his own favour, this time by exploiting his experiences in order to construct himself as the wise advisor of a young king (a different version of the pedagogical relationship he claimed earlier). It is impossible to adjudicate securely between these positions. Epistolary relativism, as we have seen, militates against authoritative judgement.

The renegotiation of divine status also appears in letter 12, also from Darius to Alexander:

> ὅς υ⟨ἱ⟩ῷ ἔδωκεν ν[είκην, αὐτὸς ἀφήρπασε]ν ὁ θεὸς [...] [σὺ δὲ τῶν θεῶν τὴ]ν νείκην σοι δόντων [γείνωσκε ἃ μεγαλοφρο]νήσας ἔπαθον· μὴ [νῦν αὐτὸς μεγαλοφρο]νήσῃς. θνητὰ δὲ καὶ [τὰ τῶν θεῶν τέκνα. ὁμ]ογενεῖς ἐσμεν, ὁμο[γενεῖς δ' ὄντες, ὅμως ο]ὐκ ἀθάνατοι.
>
> The same god who gave victory to his son [took it away] [...] As for you: now that the gods have granted you victory, [acknowledge] what I suffered in my arrogance; make sure that [you yourself are] not arrogant. Even [the children of gods] are mortal. We are of the same descent, and [although of the same descent we] are still not immortal. (Letter 12)

The restoration of the text is highly conjectural, but it seems likely that for the last two sentences, something like the reconstruction of Pieraccioni (the editor of *PSI* 1285) must be right.[31] The letter, then, seems to seek an extraordinarily captious escape from the discourse of divinity. Darius still asserts that he is the descendant of gods, but being god-born is now not the same as immortality; to the contrary, Darius haughtily suggests that mortals should know their place in the scheme of things. Despite the apparent concession that he was wrong in the past (for his arrogance, if the restoration is correct), Darius' primary concern seems to be to extricate himself from his earlier, now-refuted claims to divinity (as opposed to divine ancestry).

IV. Alexander // Darius: Mirroring Power

This tactic is designed to rescue an impossible situation. At the moment when his status is most under threat, Darius can no longer claim superiority over Alexander, so instead he claims a kind of parity. Alexander and Darius are placed on the same level, in this new category of 'human but god-born' (which, ironically, the *Romance* narrative specifically denies: Alexander's

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[31] Merkelbach proposes θνητὰ δὲ καὶ [ἀνθρώπινα φρόνει. δι]ογενεῖς ἐσμεν, ὁμό[τιμοί τε θεοῖς, ἀλλ' ο]ὐκ ἀθάνατοι. The words are different, but there is a similar emphasis on common divine ancestry coupled with common human status.

human father, Nectanebo, seduces Olympias by *pretending* to be a god, 1.5–10). This mirroring inhabits even the formal phrasing of the letter (again, with the caveat that much is restored). The same god can both give and take away; the same verb *megalophronein* is used of both Alexander and Darius; they both share a divine heritage. Epistolarity in general binds author and recipient into a tight nexus of reciprocity, a model of equally weighted exchange at the material level; here Darius transforms that functional reciprocity into a sense of identity between the two players. Despite these claims to parity, however, Darius once again can be found seeking to control the situation by constructing an authoritative epistolary identity: the gnomic phrasing and imperative (if the restoration is correct) indicate his claims to greater insight.

For all that this sense of identity between Alexander and Darius is a figment of Darius' own conjuring, it also represents an important, recurrent theme of the epistolary exchange, which shuttles between assimilation and differentiation of the two men. In the earlier episodes, Darius insists on difference, emphasising (as we have seen) the polarisation of their statuses, as he sees it, along a number of axes: Persian-Greek, immortal-mortal, king-upstart, adult-child. Alexander, by contrast, works to minimise the differences of status by professing their common humanity and denying Darius' divinity (while implicitly emphasising the differences between Greek and barbarian). After the defeat, however, it is Darius who is stressing how much they have in common: their divine descent (letter 12), and also the fact that Alexander, by virtue of his conquests, has now become 'the great king'. Epistolary exchanges, with their constant settling on and renegotiation of contracts, seem to demand an emphasis on the play of identity and difference between senders.

This mirroring of Darius and Alexander works along the cultural axis too. When writing to his satraps, Darius refers (Letter 2) to his intention to send Alexander a rattle and dice, "with which Macedonian children play" (οἷς Μακεδόνων παῖδες παίζουσι): an amusing intrusion of quasi-ethnographic description into an administrative letter. More substantial is Alexander's reference, in a letter to Darius, to the story of Zethus and Amphion, "whose exploits and stories the philosophers in your court will translate for you" (εἰμὶ γὰρ ἐκ [Ζήθο]υ καὶ 'Αμφίωνος, ὧν τὰς πράξεις καὶ ἱστορίας οἱ παρὰ σοὶ ὄντες φιλόσοφοι ἑρμηνεύουσί σοι., Letter 14). What is interesting about this is its emphasis upon translation, with its implication of linguistic and hence cultural difference. Also interesting, in terms of cultural difference, is the reference to court philosophers. I suspect the reference here is to figures like Ctesias, bilingual Greeks who can mediate between the two cultures. In

fact, a specific example of such a figure crops up in the Florence papyrus: one Polyidus (letter 13), a Greek who seems to be intimate with Darius' family, and who writes to the king to reassure him that they are all being looked after. This Polyidus is usually identified with the dithyrambic poet of the fourth century, known from other sources. In fact, his poetic credentials are very much on show in the letter itself, a pastiche of Homeric quotations and allusions, coupled with another quotation from the tragic poet Chaeremon.[32] Polyidus' role seems to be to embody, in a way that is more than a little comic, the point of contact between Darius' court and Greek culture.

But this ethnological emphasis upon cultural difference stands in tension with the implicit assimilation between the two, discussed above, and particularly with Darius' revised strategy after his defeat, which rests on his claim that they are 'of the same descent' (*homogeneis*, Letter 12, which is quoted at the end of the previous section). In a letter preserved in the Hamburg papyrus and the *Romance*, the defeated Darius appeals to a more precise affiliation: he and Alexander, he says, have a 'common kinship' (*syggeneia*) from Perseus (Letter 11). In mythological terms this just about works: Perseus is the grandfather of Heracles (the ancestor of the Macedonian royal house), and the father of Perses (the eponym of the Persians). But Alexander implicitly contests this family stemma—in part perhaps because it would seemingly cede to the Persians genealogical priority—with his reference to descent from Zethus and Amphion (in Letter 14, quoted in the previous paragraph), and thereby rejects Darius' attempt to affiliate the two, and hence to efface cultural difference. Darius and Alexander, indeed, are engaging in exactly the kind of practice that interstate negotiations often involved in the Hellenistic era, viz. what Christopher Jones calls "kinship diplomacy":[33] the deployment of mythical ancestry to reach political accommodations in the present.

V. Family, Intimacy, Emotion

Much of Darius' epistolary effort post-Issus thus goes towards reestablishing his own status in relation to his new conqueror. That, however, is not all that he wants. Issus is the occasion when Alexander captures Darius' mother (Rhodgyne), wife (Stateira) and children; letters 11, 12 and 15 represent the deposed monarch's pleas for the restitution of his family; that is the broader

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32 Allusions are gathered at Pieraccioni 1951: 186–187.

33 Jones 1999.

context for the attempts that we have already considered to define ethical limits and the proper behaviour of a human being. This fact introduces a new aspect to the epistolary exchange, an emotional timbre that is quite out of keeping with the earlier alpha-male power play. In letter 11, he asks for pity (*oikteiron*), and supplicates Alexander (*hiketas, pros Dios hikesiou*). In 12, in a section of papyrus unfortunately damaged, there seems to be more appeal to pity, combined with a threat ("if I cannot persuade you even in this way, you must reckon that I will not leave off from testing your guts—enough parts of my empire remain intact"). The capture of his family calls for a different set of resources latent in the epistolary tradition: the opportunities for intimacy, emotional appeals, and particularly relationships between the genders.

Darius' appeal for the return of his family casts him in a different role: no longer the mighty potentate, but the distraught son, husband and father. Here too there may be a distant memory of the Xerxes narrative, and perhaps more specifically of Aeschylus' *Persians*, the play that tells the story of Greek victory at Salamis in terms of Persian grief and bereavement. The redefinition of Darius, great king to family man, is of course another move in the constant epistolary game of jockeying for power (whether political or moral). But given that it is *prima facie* a less hypocritical and more emotive stance, it might also prepare the way for readers to view Darius in a more sympathetic light.

How is Darius' request for the return of his family received? Here the *Alexander Romance* diverges from the Florence papyrus. In the *Romance*, Alexander flat refuses. In the Florence papyrus, by contrast, he offers to meet Darius in Phoenicia, and there to restore to him "your children, your wife, and everything that is with them, and the cups of Dionysus and the endless gold and the treasure-stores, and you will be safely restored to the territories you used to rule over" (Letter 14, to which we shall return presently). In the Florence papyrus, Darius then replies in a letter of which a portion appears in the *Romance* (2.10); in the extended part, he refuses to accede to this "haughty" (*huperephanon*) request to meet in Phoenicia (Letter 15). The papyrus, with its offer and refusal of the Phoenicia date, thus takes a different narrative route to the *Romance* at this point, a difference that also impacts on the characterisation of the two men. In the *Romance*, Darius pathetically asks for pity and the return of his family, but is rebuffed by Alexander. In the papyrus, Alexander magnanimously offers to restore to him absolutely everything that he has taken—only to have his offer knocked back by an intemperate Darius (Alexander accuses him of adhering to his "angry, barbarian mentality" (τοῖς θυμοῖς καὶ τῷ βαρβάρῳ φρονήματι, Letter 14)). The papyrus, then, seems to work towards fixing the meaning of

the incident onto the polar axis of Greek and barbarian ethical behaviour, while the *Romance* leaves open the possibility that it is Alexander's cruelty that is at fault. The treatment of family hostages, then, seems to be an ethically problematic issue that can be nuanced differently in the tradition, depending on how the particular branch of that tradition in question wishes to finesse the characterisation of the two men.

VI. Conclusion

The *Alexander Romance* is among the earliest of Greek prose fictions, and the exchange between Alexander and Darius possibly the earliest epistolary novel (depending on our views of the *Letters* of Isocrates and Plato).[34] Even at this early stage (and despite the complexities of a protean textual tradition) we can clearly see a sophisticated grasp of the potentialities of letters as a fictional narrative form. The paradoxical, liminal quality that (as we saw at the outset) scholars have seen as the driving force behind modern epistolary fiction can already be discerned in the Alexander letters. Identities are negotiated and renegotiated, made and remade; the two protagonists move from assimilation to differentiation, always obsessively locked in a battle for dominance but at the same time mimetically retracking each others' moves.

Letters were not of course new to the Hellenistic era (as, for example, Angus Bowie's contribution to this volume shows, and as Rosenmeyer and others have shown). But the expanded Greek world of the Hellenistic era created a greater need for epistolary networks, particularly in political negotiations. The Alexander letters, although occupying a different intellectual niche, are as much a product of the intense textualisation of the Hellenistic world as, for example, Callimachus' *Pinakes*, his catalogue of the library at Alexandria: both point to a new fascination with the written word, with the power and limitation of graphic technology. Writing is everywhere in the *Alexander Romance*, the shell that houses the majority of these letters: not just in the letters, but also in the many stone inscriptions (1.3, 1.30, 1.32, 1.33, 1.34, 2.31, 2.34, 2.41),[35] and particularly in the riddling use of acrostics: the naming of the sectors of Alexandria after the first five letters of the Greek alphabet signifies "Alexander king (*basileus*) of the race (*genos*) of Zeus (*Dios*) founded (*ektisen*) the city" (1.32), and the letters of Sarapis' name also

34 For a discussion of the letters attributed to Plato, see Morrison in this volume.

35 Not all found in all recensions: Sironen 2003: 297–298 has the details.

have significance (1.33).[36] The letters thus form part of a wider celebration of textuality in the *Romance* that, if not without precedent, reflects a new accentuation of material form in the early Hellenistic world. (One useful parallel is the Hellenistic Jewish *Letter of Aristeas*, cast in the form of a letter to one Philocrates, and crammed with pseudo-documentary references.)[37] This heightened interest in texts and textuality, and in the resources (and limits) of the written word, formed the context for the emergence of the earliest example of what would become a major literary genre.

[36] See further Stoneman 1995.
[37] On Jewish-Greek epistolary narratives, see Olson's chapter in this volume.

ALCIPHRON AND THE SYMPOTIC LETTER TRADITION

Jason König

I. Introduction

My argument in this chapter is that Alciphron's *Letters* (especially Book 3, his *Letters of Parasites*) engages closely with a long-standing tradition of writing in letter form about symposia and dinner parties. One strand in that tradition is the letter of invitation. The other is the retrospective banquet letter, in other words the kind of letter which offers a report of a dinner party for the benefit of someone who was not present. A great deal of scholarly attention has been given to Alciphron's relationship with New Comedy and a number of other genres,[1] but his relationship with sympotic letter traditions has to my knowledge barely even been mentioned in earlier studies, let alone analysed at length. That neglect, I suggest, is a classic example of the way in which the importance of the letter as a frame for narrative tends to be neglected within classical scholarship in favour of canonical genres. The category of the sympotic report letter in particular has rarely been discussed at length within modern scholarship, despite the fact that it occurs so frequently within both Greek and Latin literature.

In making that argument, a secondary main aim is to draw attention to one of the features which both letter and symposium share, that is the capacity to conjure up a privileged space for elite communication.[2] We might expect that shared characteristic to make the letter form and the symposium closely compatible with each other, especially in letters which claim

[1] On Alciphron's allusions to classical texts, especially New Comedy, see (among many others) Gratwick 1979; Viellefond 1979; Reardon 1981: 180–185; Ruiz Garcia 1988; Anderson 1997: esp. 2190–2193; Ozanam 1999: esp. 31–36; Rosenmeyer 2001: esp. 257–258, differentiating her own work from the interest in charting allusions to earlier texts; Schmitz 2005, focusing on the way in which Alciphron goes out of his way to stress the artificiality of his creation; Fögen 2007.

[2] The bibliography on ancient symposium literature is vast, but much of it stresses its elitist character: for one key starting-point, see Murray 1990; also König 2012 on the Greek symposium literature of the Roman Empire. For a discussion of epistolary narratives constructed around Epicurean sympotic traditions, see Gordon in this volume (pp. 133–151).

to reproduce, whether in advance or in hindsight, the sympotic experience. More often, however, the letter form turns out to be have a disruptive force in relation to the symposium, as if the dialogue between writer and addressee stands in conflict with the relationship between the symposiasts, over-riding it and drowning it out—perhaps not surprisingly, given that epistolary communication is private and written, in contrast with the public, oral character of the Greek drinking party. Alciphron, as we shall see, exploits that potential to the full.

II. Letters in the Symposium

Before I turn to the two main categories of sympotic letter just mentioned I want to illustrate that last set of points by giving some attention to stories about letters being introduced physically into the symposium. This material is not directly relevant to the letters about symposia which I go on to discuss in the section following, or indeed to Alciphron's work specifically, but it does give a vivid preliminary illustration of the uneasy relationship between letter and symposium which runs right through the Greek literary tradition.

Admittedly some of these stories do give the impression that the letter writer can almost participate in the conversation between the symposiasts through his epistolary communication. That impression is in line with the idea, widely expressed in the context of ancient theorising about epistolarity, that the letter offers its reader intimate access to the voice of the writer. For example, Demetrius, *On Style* 223 records that "Artemon, the editor of Aristotle's *Letters*, says that one should write a dialogue and letters in the same way; for the letter is like one of the sides of a dialogue".[3] In 227 he suggests, moreover, that "The letter should be strong in characterisation, just like the dialogue; for everyone writes a letter almost as an image of his own soul. And it is possible to see the character of the writer in every type of writing, but in none so much as in the letter".[4] That said, he also expresses some reservations about Artemon's formulation in 223, reminding his readers that letter style is usually a little more formal than what one would expect from a conversation. Even if they have some similarities, epistolary

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[3] All translations are my own.

[4] For other passages which stress the idea of intimate communication in letter form, see (among many others) Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 12.53 and Seneca, *Moral Epistles* 40.1 and 75.1–2, conveniently collected and translated in Malherbe 1988: esp. 12 for summary of key passages; cf. Stowers 1986: 58–70 for the category of 'friendly letters'.

and conversational communication are not a perfect match, as we shall see more starkly in what follows.

One particularly good example of a letter writer joining in with a symposium conversation through his letter occurs in Plutarch's *Symposium of the Seven Sages*, an imaginary recreation of a banquet involving the famous seven wise men of archaic Greece, and a number of other guests, set in the court of the tyrant Periander. Early on in their conversation, one of the wise men, Bias, brings a letter from the Egyptian king asking for advice, and the letter is read out loud by the king's envoy Neiloxenos:

> Βασιλεὺς Αἰγυπτίων Ἄμασις λέγει Βίαντι σοφωτάτῳ Ἑλλήνων. Βασιλεὺς Αἰθιόπων ἔχει πρὸς ἐμὲ σοφίας ἅμιλλαν. ἡττώμενος δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐπὶ πᾶσι συντέθεικεν ἄτοπον ἐπίταγμα καὶ δεινόν, ἐκπιεῖν με κελεύων τὴν θάλατταν. ἔστι δὲ λύσαντι μὲν ἔχειν κώμας τε πολλὰς καὶ πόλεις τῶν ἐκείνου, μὴ λύσαντι δ' ἄστεων τῶν περὶ Ἐλεφαντίνην ἀποστῆναι. σκεψάμενος οὖν εὐθὺς ἀπόπεμπε Νειλόξενον. ἃ δὲ δεῖ φίλοις σοῖς ἢ πολίταις γενέσθαι παρ' ἡμῶν οὐ τἀμὰ κωλύσει.

> Amasis, king of the Egyptians, addresses Bias, the wisest of the Greeks. The king of the Ethiopians is engaged in a wisdom contest against me. Being repeatedly defeated in all other things, he has devised, as his crowning effort, a strange and terrible demand, ordering me to drink up the sea. If I solve the problem, I am to have many of his villages and cities; if not, I am to retreat from the towns lying around the island of Elephantine. Examine the question, then, and send back Neiloxenos straight away. And whatever is right for your friends or citizens to receive from us, for my part I will not stand in the way of it. (151b–c)

Bias quickly provides an ingenious solution, much to Neiloxenos' delight ("let him say to the Ethiopian that he must stop the rivers which flow into the sea while he himself drinks up the sea as it now is; for it is in relation to this sea that the command has been made, not the one which will come into being in the future" (151d)). The guests then take it in turns to provide a single sentence of advice to Amasis on the subject of good government. Finally they attempt solutions to the riddles set by Amasis for the Ethiopian king, reported in the second half of the letter. Here, then, the letter carries Amasis' voice across physical space, allowing him a kind of virtual participation in the symposium, posing appropriately sympotic puzzles for the other guests and benefitting in turn from their wisdom.[5]

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[5] However, see Kim 2009: esp. 487–490, arguing that Plutarch's attempt to represent the sages in dialogue with Amasis is unsuccessful: "the letter's strength, which was its ability to introduce by way of proxy a distant monarch into the symposium, is also its weakness—the absent Amasis cannot respond to the Sage's intervention" (488). Amasis is also imagined as a letter-writer in the historical narratives of Herodotus and Xenophon.

More often, however, letters in the symposium disrupt sympotic harmony. A neat mirror image of the letter of Amasis comes in Lucian's *Symposium*, an account of a gathering of philosophers which degenerates into a slapstick brawl (and which was probably written at least partly as a parodic response to Plutarch's sympotic writing).[6] Early on in Lucian's banquet, a letter is read out from the Stoic philosopher Hetoemocles, who expresses his anger at not having been invited, as well as his scorn for the whole event:

> Ἑτοιμοκλῆς φιλόσοφος Ἀρισταινέτῳ.
> Ὅπως μὲν ἔχω πρὸς δεῖπνα ὁ παρεληλυθώς μοι βίος ἅπας μαρτύριον ἂν γένοιτο, ὅς γε ὁσημέραι πολλῶν ἐνοχλούντων παρὰ πολὺ σοῦ πλουσιωτέρων ὅμως οὐδὲ πώποτε φέρων ἐμαυτὸν ἐπέδωκα εἰδὼς τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς συμποσίοις θορύβους καὶ παροινίας. ἐπὶ σοῦ δὲ μόνου εἰκότως ἀγανακτῆσαί μοι δοκῶ, ὅς τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὑπ' ἐμοῦ λιπαρῶς τεθεραπευμένος οὐκ ἠξίωσας ἐναριθμῆσαι κἀμὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις φίλοις, ἀλλὰ μόνος ἐγώ σοι ἄμοιρος, καὶ ταῦτα ἐν γειτόνων οἰκῶν.
>
> Hetoemocles the philosopher to Aristainetos. The whole of my past life can testify to how I feel about dinner parties. Even though many men who are much richer than you pester me every day, never yet have I devoted myself to dining, knowing the uproar and drunken behavior which takes places at *symposia*. But in your case alone it seems reasonable to me to be angry, because you have not thought fit to number me too among your friends, despite the fact that I have attended on you assiduously for so long; instead, I alone am excluded, and that too though I am your next-door neighbour.
> (*Symposium* 22)

He also accuses one of the other guests of having had an affair with the host's son, an accusation which leads to an argument between several of the other philosophers which includes wine throwing, spitting and beard pulling. Here, then, the letter signals the writer's hostility to and separateness from the sympotic community (although ironically it also at the same time makes clear his likeness to the other guests, since his quarrelsomeness, as it turns out, matches theirs).[7]

Common also are scenes where letters are delivered to the symposium and read silently, disturbing the symposiast to such a degree that he finds it

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6 See Frazier 1994.

7 Cf. Branham 1989: 114–116, on the way in which Hetoemocles' projection of a dignified persona in the letter is undermined by the mockery of the listening guests; Romeri 2002: 212–215; Jeanneret 1991: 150–152, who similarly emphasizes the letter's incompatibility with the banquet, but for him the incompatibility is primarily a literary one, an example of Lucian's Menippean interest in creating a cacophonous bricolage. For further discussion of Lucian's treatment of the symposium theme and feasting, see Slater in this volume (pp. 211–216).

very difficult any longer to give his full attention to the sympotic community he is part of. Two examples from the Greek novels, both involving love letters, stand out. Both passages represent the intense, private communication of the letter as something which cuts through the more artificial community of the symposium. The first is from Chariton's *Chaireas and Callirhoe* Book 4.[8] Dionysius is desperately in love with the heroine Callirhoe at this point, believing that the hero Chaireas is dead. In the middle of a party, in which he is described entertaining "the most distinguished of his fellow citizens" (4.5.7), an intercepted letter is delivered to him, written by Chaireas to Callirhoe, announcing that he is still alive. Dionysius' emotions spill out to the surface, so that he cannot even bring himself to keep up the pretence of conviviality: "during the confusion and the bustle he came to his senses, and realising what had happened to him he ordered his servants to carry him across to another room, pretending that he wanted to be alone. The symposium broke up in gloom, for they assumed that he had had a stroke" (4.5.9–10). Here the letter communicates and provokes real emotions, which are represented as being so forceful that they cut through the more public kinds of communication on which the symposium depends.

Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon* 5.18–21 is very similar. The hero Cleitophon receives a letter from Leucippe while dining with his new fiancée Melite, thinking that Leucippe is dead.[9] His reaction is immediate: "when I read this, I experienced all possible feelings at the same time: I burned, I went pale, I was amazed, I disbelieved, I rejoiced, I was vexed" (τούτοις ἐντυχὼν πάντα ἐγινόμην ὁμοῦ· ἀνεφλεγόμην, ὠχρίων, ἐθαύμαζον, ἠπίστουν, ἔχαιρον, ἠχθόμην, 5.19.1). The letter calls him back from the new world of falsity which his liaison with Melite has committed him to, leading him to experience his real feelings of love for Leucippe once again. The power of the letter form to simulate face-to-face dialogue is so intense that it seems almost to bring to life Leucippe's voice and conjure her before his eyes: "'Look at how she reproaches me through her letter'. And at the same time turning to the letter again, as if I could see her through it, and reading it sentence by sentence, I said, 'You criticise me rightly, my darling'" (ἀλλ' ἰδού μοι διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ἐγκαλεῖ. καὶ ἅμα αὖθις ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς γράμμασιν, ὡς

[8] See Rosenmeyer 2001: 139–141; Létoublon 2003: 279–280; Whitmarsh 2005: 119–122, focusing especially on the tension between public and private in this scene; Robiano 2007; see further Repath in this volume (pp. 238–239).

[9] See Rosenmeyer 2001: 149–152; Létoublon 2003: 280–281; Repath, this volume (pp. 242–244).

ἐκείνην δι' αὐτῶν βλέπων, καὶ ἀναγινώσκων καθ' ἓν ἔλεγον· Δίκαια ἐγκαλεῖς, φιλτάτη. 5.19.5). Cleitophon writes and dispatches a letter to her in turn; and then he re-enters the world of sympotic pretence once his own letter is written, except now even more reluctantly: "I tried to force my face to convey an expression no different from before; but I was not able to control it entirely" (5.21.2). The letter is thus represented as intimate and sincere, like the emotions it provokes; its communicative power is so intense that it over-rides the less sincere sympotic communication between Cleitophon and Melite. Admittedly the distinction is not clear-cut. There are various hints that the "sincerity" of Cleitophon's response may be in part an act, and a product of the way in which he tells the story with hindsight. It is striking, for example, that he is initially unsure what to say in reply, and asks Satyros to write for him. Nevertheless, the key point remains that the letter here opens up a new world for Cleitophon which is more powerful and more vivid than the sympotic situation to which he should be giving his attention.

The letter's association with business and politics can be another reason for its incompatibility with the symposium. In Plutarch's *Sympotic Questions* 1.3, for example, Plutarch and his friends are discussing why the final seat on the middle couch at the symposium is especially honoured by the Romans, and known as the "consul's seat". One suggestion is that it was traditionally allocated to consuls because it was the most suitable place for him to deal with matters of business during a party without disturbing the other guests, and to receive letters. In this case the dining room is set up so that the letter can be brought in with a minimum of interruption. Plutarch also tells us that the Roman consul is "not like Archias the Theban polemarch, and when written notes or verbal messages worthy of his attention are brought to him while dining, he does not push aside the letter saying 'serious things tomorrow'" (οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὕπατος οἷος Ἀρχίας ὁ Θηβαίων πολέμαρχος, ὥστε, γραμμάτων ἢ λόγων αὐτῷ μεταξὺ δειπνοῦντι φροντίδος ἀξίων προσπεσόντων, ἐπιφθεγξάμενος, εἰς ἕω τὰ σπουδαῖα, τὴν μὲν ἐπιστολὴν παρῶσαι λαβεῖν δὲ τὴν θηρίκλειον, *QC* 1.3, 619d–e): Archias was renowned for having ignored a letter warning him of a conspiracy, delivered to him in the middle of a drinking party, a mistake for which he paid with his life.[10] Here again, the letter's intimate and urgent claim on the attention of the symposiast is represented as incompatible with full immersion in the sympotic experience.

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[10] The story is retold in Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas* 10.3–4 and in *On the Sign of Socrates* 30, 596e–f.

III. Letters of Invitation and Report

At first sight, the two main categories of sympotic letter I am interested in here—letters of invitation and letters of report—seem more likely to be in harmony with sympotic experience than the letters I have been looking at so far. They have the capacity to conjure up—either in advance or in retrospect—with an almost ecphrastic quality, an idealised image of the luxury, or sometimes the philosophical frugality of the events they describe. For now I focus on letters of report,[11] since this is the less well known of the two categories.[12] Here our richest source is Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. Many of his examples are taken in turn from the work of the Hellenistic anecdotist Lynceus.[13] For example, the opening of *Deipnosophists* Book 4 reads as follows:

> Ἱππόλοχος ὁ Μακεδών, ἑταῖρε Τιμόκρατες, τοῖς χρόνοις μὲν γέγονε κατὰ Λυγκέα καὶ Δοῦριν τοὺς Σαμίους, Θεοφράστου δὲ τοῦ Ἐρεσίου μαθητάς, συνθήκας δ' εἶχε ταύτας πρὸς τὸν Λυγκέα, ὡς ἐκ τῶν αὐτοῦ μαθεῖν ἔστιν ἐπιστολῶν, πάντως αὐτῷ δηλοῦν εἴ τινι συμπεριενεχθείη δείπνῳ πολυτελεῖ, τὰ ὅμοια κἀκείνου ἀντιπροπίνοντος αὐτῷ. ἑκατέρων οὖν σῴζονται δειπνητικαί τινες ἐπιστολαί, Λυγκέως μὲν τὸ Λαμίας τῆς Ἀττικῆς αὐλητρίδος ἐμφανίζοντος δεῖπνον Ἀθήνησι γενόμενον Δημητρίῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἐπίκλην δὲ Πολιορκητῇ (ἐρωμένη δ' ἦν ἡ Λάμια τοῦ Δημητρίου), τοῦ δ' Ἱππολόχου τοὺς Καράνου τοῦ Μακεδόνος ἐμφανίζοντος γάμους. καὶ ἄλλαις δὲ περιετύχομεν τοῦ Λυγκέως ἐπιστολαῖς πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν γεγραμμέναις Ἱππόλοχον, δηλούσαις τό τε Ἀντιγόνου τοῦ βασιλέως δεῖπνον Ἀφροδίσια ἐπιτελοῦντος Ἀθήνησι καὶ τὸ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως.
>
> The Macedonian Hippolochus, my friend Timocrates, was a contemporary of the Samians Lynceus and Douris, who were pupils of Theophrastus, and he entered into this agreement with Lynceus, as we can tell from his *Letters*, that he would give Lynceus a full account if he participated in any expensive dinner party, and Lynceus offered the same favour in return. And so from both of these men are preserved certain "dinner letters": Lynceus reports a dinner given at Athens by the Attic flute-player Lamia to king Demetrius, who was nicknamed Poliorcetes (Lamia was Demetrius' lover); and Hippolochus

[11] What follows is not intended as a fully comprehensive survey. For good examples not discussed further below, see Pliny, Letters 3.1 and 5.6; Sidonius, *Letters* 2.9.6 (cf. 2.2.11–15, although that latter example is not from an account of a single event).

[12] For invitation letters, see Kim 1975 on papyrus invitation letters (although most of these are relatively cursory by comparison with the literary examples examined here); Edmunds 1982 on the invitation tradition in Latin poetry, and the possible significance of predecessors in Hellenistic Greek epigram, especially Philodemus, several of whose epigrams envisage frugal Epicurean menus (on Philodemus, see also Sider 1997: 153 and 161); Rosenmeyer 2001: 105–106; Trapp 2003: 82–87 and 228–236 (including Horace, *Epistles* 1.15, Julian, *Epistles* 54 and Phalaris, *Epistles* 39).

[13] See Dalby 2000.

> reports the wedding feast of Caranus the Macedonian. I have also encountered other letters of Lynceus written to this same Hippolochus, describing the dinner hosted by king Antigonus when he was celebrating the festival of the Aphrodisia at Athens, and another hosted by king Ptolemy. (4, 128a–b)

He proceeds to quote a long extract from Hippolochus' letter describing the astonishing luxury of Caranus' party (128c–130ds).

Other sympotic letter-writers appear in the pages of Athenaeus too. Later in Book 4, for example, he gives us extracts from a letter by one Parmeniscus describing a banquet of Cynics in Athens:

> Παρμενίσκος Μόλπιδι χαίρειν. πλεονάζων ἐν ταῖς προσφωνήσεσι πρὸς σὲ περὶ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν κλήσεων ἀγωνιῶ μή ποτε εἰς πληθώραν ἐμπεσὼν μεμψιμοιρήσῃς. διὸ καὶ μεταδοῦναί σοι βούλομαι τοῦ παρὰ Κέβητι τῷ Κυζικηνῷ δείπνου·
>
> Parmeniscus to Molpis, greetings. Since I am generous in my communications with you on the subject of the distinguished invitations I receive, I am anxious lest you should be critical of me through having become full of such things. For that reason I want to give you a share in the dinner I attended at the house of Cebes of Cyzicus. (4, 156d)

There is even one passage of Athenaeus which hints that there may have been a tradition of parasites writing letters of sympotic report which may have been particularly influential upon Alciphron. In 6, 244a Athenaeus tells us:

> Callimachus even includes in his table of miscellaneous writings a work by Chaerophon; he writes as follows: 'Those who have written on dinners: Chaerophon to Curebion'. Then immediately he adds the opening—'Since you have often requested from me …'—and the length—'375 lines'. It has been explained already that Curebion was a parasite.[14]

Letters of sympotic report thus often invite their addressee to share in the pleasures of the original occasion—as Parmeniscus does explicitly in the passage just quoted ("For that reason I want to give you a share in the dinner I attended …"). Often, however, it turns out on closer inspection that letters of this type are in fact distancing themselves from the occasions they describe, for example by criticising them[15] or treating them as alien and

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14 See Dalby 2000: 377–378 on Lynceus' interest in anecdotes related to parasites.

15 For a version of that motif not linked with a specific single event, see the third part of Lucian's *Saturnalia* (19–39), a set of four letters complaining about sympotic misbehaviour: the author writes to the god Cronus, asking him to force the rich to give fairer treatment to the poor at banquets; Cronus replies and then writes to the rich; and finally the rich reply to Cronus complaining about the behaviour of the poor and blaming the dispute on them: see Niall Slater's chapter in this volume.

exotic.[16] The latter is true especially in letters where a report on banqueting customs is part of an ethnographic agenda, a way of describing foreign customs for an addressee from the writer's own culture, as seems to be the case in the sympotic letter Athenaeus quotes from most often, that is Lynceus' *Letter to Diagoras*, which seems to have been dedicated to comparing the food of Rhodes with the food of Athens.[17] These effects of distancing are often enhanced by the contrast between the writer's intimacy with his addressee and his more standoffish relationship with the sympotic community he is describing.

A classic case is Pliny, *Letters* 2.6, one of a number of letters in Pliny's collection which suggest that he had an intimate knowledge of the conventions of sympotic letter writing, and an interest in ingenious manipulation of them.[18] The letter opens with a scathing account of his host's combination of luxury and meanness:

> longum est altius repetere nec refert, quemadmodum acciderit, ut homo minime familiaris cenarem apud quendam, ut sibi videbatur, lautum et diligentem, ut mihi, sordidum simul et sumptuosum. nam sibi et paucis opima quaedam, ceteris vilia et minuta ponebat. vinum etiam parvolis lagunculis in tria genera discripserat, non ut potestas eligendi, sed ne ius esset recusandi, aliud sibi et nobis, aliud minoribus amicis—nam gradatim amicos habet—aliud suis nostrisque libertis.

> It would take a long time to recall—and it would not be worth the effort—how I came to be dining, without having any particular intimacy with him, with a man who seemed to himself to be both splendid and economical, but who seemed to me to be both mean and extravagant. For himself and a few others he served with rich food, while to the rest he gave cheap food in small servings. He had also divided the wine into small flagons in three different types, not so that there would be freedom of choice but in order that there should be no possibility of refusing—one of them for him and for us, another for his lesser friends—for he ranks his friends in order of precedence—and another for his freedmen and ours. (2.6.1–2)

In the second half of the letter, Pliny then offers advice to his addressee, Avitus:

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16 An obvious example is the *Letter of Aristeas*, where an account of the attendance of Jewish scholars attending symposia at the Alexandrian court is framed by ethnographic discussion of Jewish culture. For Jewish epistolography in Greek, see Olson's chapter in this volume.

17 See esp. Dalby 1996: 157–160, with Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 75e, 109d–e, 285e–f, 295a–b, 647a–b and 652d.

18 Cf. Gowers 1993: 269–270. Letters of philosophical advice are discussed in two other chapters in this volume: Gordon on Epicurus, and Morrison on the letters attributed to Plato.

> quorsus haec? ne tibi, optimae indolis iuveni, quorundam in mensa luxuria specie frugalitatis imponat. convenit autem amori in te meo, quotiens tale aliquid inciderit, sub exemplo praemonere, quid debeas fugere. igitur memento nihil magis esse vitandum quam istam luxuriae et sordium novam societatem; quae cum sint turpissima discreta ac separata, turpius iunguntur. vale.
>
> Why am I telling you these things? So that you, a young man of excellent character, should not be impressed by the luxury of some people in their dining which masquerades under the guise of frugality. It is fitting to the affection I feel towards you, whenever I come across such an incident, that I should warn you what to avoid, by giving you an example. So remember that there is nothing you should avoid more than that new combination of meanness and extravagance: those qualities are disgraceful even individually; they are even more disgraceful when they are joined together. Farewell.
>
> (2.6.6–7)

As so often the intimacy between writer and addressee here goes far beyond Pliny's lukewarm relations with his host ("for I am no particular friend of his"—an appropriate sentiment for a man whose attitude to friendship is so mercenary that he "classifies his acquaintances" and gives different wine to each). The giving of advice or the presentation of moralising generalisations is a key technique by which sympotic letters conjure up a shared set of values between writer and addressee which is assumed to be at odds with the behaviour of the symposiasts under discussion, and which trumps the sense of imagined sympotic community which they are at least notionally committed to by their participation in the event described. There is also of course a related and long-standing tradition of using letters to give philosophical advice about proper convivial behaviour, often without making reference to a specific event, especially within philosophical letters which recommend frugality and condemn luxury.[19]

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[19] E.g. see Richardson-Hay 2009 on Seneca's *Letters* (see e.g. *Ep.* 95 for a good example); Plato, *Letter* 7, esp. 326b–d, which harnesses the traditions of ethnographical food description already noted, expressing disapproval of Sicilian banquets; Malherbe 1977 for many examples of Cynic letters on this theme, conveniently available in English translation: among others, Anacharsis, *Letters* 3 and 5, Crates, *Letters* 10, 14, 17, 18 and Diogenes, *Letters* 6, 20 (describing an occasion where Diogenes has been beaten up by drunkards in Athens, a description which has much in common with some of the descriptions of beatings in Alciprhon's parasite letters discussed below) and 37; and for a rather different example see Cicero *Ad fam.* 9.24.2–3, where Cicero, rather than denouncing convivial behaviour, writes to his friend Paetus urging him not to give up on the habit of dining out. There is also an extensive tradition (too extensive to survey here; see König 2012: 121–150) of giving instruction on dining, diet and fasting in letter form in early Christian writing; the most obvious example is Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*. For a discussion of Christian letters, see McLarty in this volume.

Even invitation letters, which are for understandable reasons usually complimentary about the occasions they describe, nevertheless spawn a set of less complimentary subgenres, most strikingly letters which refuse invitations or complain about invitations (or non-invitations, in the case of Hetoemocles quoted above). In these cases the writer advertises his own incompatibility with or distance from the occasion in question, resisting the response we would usually expect in an epistolary exchange about an invitation, i.e. collusion with the idealised image of hospitality which conventional invitation letters usually project. One common version of that kind of response comes in letters from philosophers who refuse invitations and in the process denounce the luxury of the occasions to which they have been invited (once again that tendency is related to what we find in letters which moralise about sympotic behaviour without reference to a specific occasion). In all of these cases the philosophical letter writer uses the letter form to construct an imaginary, idealised image of frugality which is insulated from the luxury he criticises. Once again, Pliny offers us a playful example, this time in *Letters* 3.12:[20] "I will come to dinner, but even now I must secure your agreement that the meal will be frugal, with only commonplace food, and that it will be rich only in Socratic conversation" (*veniam ad cenam, sed iam nunc paciscor, sit expedita sit parca, Socraticis tantum sermonibus abundet*, 3.12.1). Here Pliny's epistolary reply constructs an image of the banquet which is implicitly in rivalry with the image projected by the original invitation—although as Emily Gowers points out, the bantering tone of the letter is also in some ways appropriate to meal itself, designed to recreate the light-hearted tone of convivial discussion.[21]

IV. Sympotic Letters in Alciphron

The existence of these traditions of sympotic letter writing—not just invitation letters but also letters which report on banquets, and which may even include a sub-category of letters written by parasites—in itself goes a long way to explain Alciphron's choice of subject matter. That point has been oddly neglected within Alciphron scholarship. Alciphron offers us the pleasures of observing his ingenious reshaping not just of New Comic traditions but also of epistolary ones. Most of the 42 letters in Book 3, his *Letters of Par-*

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20 See also Gowers 1993: 267–279 for another ingenious manipulation of epistolary invitation motifs in Pliny, *Letters* 1.15.

21 See Gowers 1993: 271.

asites, are parodies of letters of invitation and report. There are quite a few examples also in his other three books (Book 1, *Letters of Fishermen*; Book 2, *Letters of Farmers*; Book 4, *Letters of Courtesans*). One of Alciphron's aims in the work as a whole is to construct a fantasy image of the voices of the sub-elite underbelly of classical Athens, voices which imitate the motifs of elite self-representation, but are also represented at the same time as comically and absurdly distant from elite dignity. In order to achieve those effects, Alciphron exploits the sympotic letter's capacity to recreate and share the event it describes: that is the case in a number of letters where his characters write with relish to friends about events they have enjoyed or expect to enjoy, usually events which stand as absurdly undignified parodies of elite commensality. He also exploits the sympotic letter's capacity to conjure up a view of the world which stands in conflict with or at least distanced from the values of the event it describes, in letters where his non-elite characters show their disapproval of or discomfort with the elite dining occasions they get caught up in. Each of these letters brings before our eyes—as letter narratives always do, though not always in quite such extravagant and self-consciously fabricated form—an image of idealised community between writer and addressee, a fantasy worldview which is often isolated from and resistant to the norms of wider society, and at least temporarily secure from challenge within its own safe and clearly bounded epistolary domain. That standard epistolary effect is one of the things which made the letter an ideal vehicle for the rhetorical exercise of *ethopoieia* (character creation) which so heavily influenced Alciphron and a number of his contemporaries.[22]

First, a number of fairly straightforward examples where the letter aims to reproduce sympotic pleasures, in advance or with hindsight. In 2.15, the farmer Eustachys writes to his neighbour as follows:

> Τοὐμοῦ παιδίου γενέσια ἑορτάζων ἥκειν σε ἐπὶ τὴν πανδαισίαν, ὦ Πιθακ⟨ν⟩ίων, παρακαλῶ, ἥκειν δὲ οὐ μόνον ἀλλ' ἐπαγόμενον τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ παιδία καὶ τὸν σύργαστρον· εἰ βούλοιο δέ, καὶ τὴν κύνα … ἑορτάσομεν δὲ μάλ' ἡδέως, καὶ πιόμεθα εἰς μέθην καὶ μετὰ τὸν κόρον ᾀσόμεθα, καὶ ὅστις ἐπιτήδειος κορδακίζειν, εἰς μέσους παρελθὼν τὸ κοινὸν ψυχαγωγήσει.

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[22] On *ethopoieia* and its influence on Alciphron, see Ureña 1993; Rosenmeyer 2001: 259–263; Schmitz 2005: 90–91; Fögen 2007: 202. See also Malosse 2005 on letters and *ethopoieia* more generally, with Theon, *Progymnasmata* 115 and Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 67 (both conveniently translated in Kennedy 2003); also Stowers 1986: 32–35 and Stirewalt 1993: 20–24 for letter-writing as a school exercise and a basis for rhetorical training; and Reed 1997, who argues that rhetorical conventions had strong influence on ancient epistolary practice and theory.

> I am celebrating my son's birthday, and I invite you, Pithacnion, to come to our perfect banquet; indeed to come not on your own but with you your wife and your children and your workman, and if you want, your dog also … We shall give a very pleasurable feast, and we shall drink until drunk, and when we are full we shall sing, and whoever is able to dance the *cordax* shall come forward and beguile us. (2.15.1–2)

The writer communicates here his unqualified relish at the prospect of the celebration. In that sense this letter imitates elite, literary invitation letters. But the details of what the invitee should expect are comically debased and absurd versions of elite practice: the host issues his invitation with a rustic disregard for gender and rank (even the dog is invited), and eagerly anticipates the dancing of the cordax, a dance which was traditionally associated with vulgarity and low status.[23] In 4.13 and 4.14, Alciphron offers us two much longer letters from courtesans where the letter writers describe banquets they have recently attended, in both cases in highly eroticised terms.[24] *Letter* 4.13 is a rustic banquet, where the courtesans slip away with their lovers into the undergrowth after the first round of drinking, and where the list of luxurious food and wine imitates similar lists in more dignified accounts of elite dining but also overlays them with erotic connotations:

> οἶνος ἦν οὐκ ἐπιχώριος, ἀλλὰ ᾿Ιταλός, οἵου σὺ ἔφης καδίσκους ἓξ ᾿Ελευσῖνι ἐωνῆσθαι, σφόδρα ἡδὺς καὶ ἄφθονος· ᾠά τε τὰ τρέμοντα ταῦτα ὥσπερ αἱ πυγαί, καὶ χιμαιρίδος ἁπαλῆς τεμάχη καὶ ἀλεκτορίδες οἰκουροί· εἶτα γαλάκτια ποικίλα.

> The wine was not local, but Italian, the type you said you had bought six jars of at Eleusis, very sweet and abundant; and there were eggs of just the consistency to quiver like Thryallis' buttocks, and slices of tender kid and home-bred chicken; and then a great range of milk cakes … (4.13.9–10)

In 4.14, a different banquet includes a competition between the guests, not, as one would traditionally expect within the sympotic tradition, of wisdom or poetic quotation or singing, but instead a beauty contest:

> τὸ δ' οὖν πλείστην ἡμῖν παρασκευάσαν τέρψιν, δεινή τις φιλονεικία κατέσχε Θρυαλλίδα καὶ Μυρρίνην ὑπὲρ τῆς πυγῆς ποτέρα κρείττω καὶ ἁπαλωτέραν ἐπιδείξει … καὶ τοσοῦτον παλμὸν ἐξειργάσατο τῆς πυγῆς, καὶ ἅπασαν αὐτὴν ὑπὲρ τὴν ὀσφῦν τῇδε καὶ τῇδε ὥσπερ ῥέουσαν περιεδίνησεν, ὥστε ἀνακροτῆσαι πάσας καὶ νικᾶν ἀποφήνασθαι τὴν Θρυαλλίδα.

> … the thing which gave us greatest pleasure was the great rivalry which gripped Thryallis and Myrrhine over who could display the best and softest

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[23] See Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 14, 631d.

[24] Cf. Aristaenetus, *Letters* 1.3 for a similar late antique example, probably influenced by Alciphron.

> buttocks … And then she engineered such a great quivering of her buttocks, and shook the whole bulk above her loins this way and that as if it was flowing water, that we applauded and declared that victory belonged to Thryallis. (4.14.4–6)

In both of these cases the aim of allowing the recipient to share the intimacy of the sympotic experience through the intimacy of the letter form is made explicit, for example in 4.13.19:

> ἔδει ἀπολαῦσαί σε τῆς γοῦν ἀκοῆς τοῦ συμποσίου—τρυφερὸν γὰρ ἦν καὶ πρέπον ἐρωτικῇ ὁμιλίᾳ—εἰ καὶ μὴ τῆς παροινίας ἐδυνήθης· … σὺ δὲ εἰ μὲν ὄντως ἔσχηκας μαλακῶς, ὅπως ἄμεινον ἕξεις σκόπει·

> It was right for you to enjoy at least a report of the symposium (for it was luxurious and appropriate to an erotic gathering) even if you were not able to enjoy the drunkenness itself … If you have really been unwell, see if you can get better …[25]

In Book 3, by contrast, the relation between the epistolary community and the sympotic community tends to be less harmonious, not surprisingly given the reputation of parasites for discontentment with their lot. Two of the letters in Book 3 draw on the traditions of ethnographic letters about another culture's feasting habits which we know about from Athenaeus. In 3.15 a parasite complains about the way in which he has been mistreated in Corinth:

> οἷα γὰρ καινουργεῖν ἐπιχειροῦσιν ἀναγκάζοντες ἀσκωλιάζοντας πίνειν, διάπυρόν τε τὸν οἶνον καὶ θερμὸν ἄνευ τοῦ πρὸς ὕδωρ κράματος καταχέοντες, εἶτα [ὀστέα] κῶλά τε καὶ ἀστραγάλους καθάπερ τοῖς κυσὶ παραρριπτοῦντες καὶ νάρθηκας ἐπιρρηγνύντες, καὶ σκύτεσι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἱμᾶσιν ἀντὶ παιδιᾶς πλήττοντες.

> What novelties they try to introduce, making you drink while hopping on a greased wineskin, pouring wine down your throat which is fiery and hot without any mixing of water; and then they throw you leg-bones and knucklebones as they would to dogs and they break sticks over you and they hit you with leather thongs and other whips as a joke. (3.15.3)

Similarly in 3.24 a parasite complains to his addressee about the way in which the inhabitants of the city of Corinth spend all their time picking up scraps of food from the ground. Here we see the traditions of Lynceus' *Letter to Diagoras* rewritten in a much more gritty, undignified idiom.

More often, however, the parasites complain about their experience of dinners closer to home.[26] Frequently their reports—rather like the first of the Corinthian examples just mentioned—describe the way in which lux-

[25] Cf. similar sentiments in 4.14.8.
[26] Other examples of complaining report letters include 3.7, 3.25, 3.30, 3.32, 3.37, 3.42.

urious foodstuffs have been used for offensive purposes. In 3.4, for example, Hetoemocossus describes how he only just escaped with his life from a recent party:

> ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀλλᾶντα ἐνέσαττεν, ὁ δὲ κόπαιον εὐμέγεθες παρώθει ταῖς γνάθοις, ὁ δὲ κρᾶμα, οὐκ οἶνον, ἀλλὰ νᾶπυ καὶ γάρον καὶ ὄξος κερασάμενος, καθάπερ εἰς πίθον ἐνέχει.
>
> For one of them would stuff sausage in to me, another would push an enormous cutlet between my jaws, another would prepare a mixture—not wine, but mustard, fish sauce, and vinegar all together—and pour it into me as if into a wine jar. (3.4.4)

In 3.12 Etheloglyptes complains to his friend Mappaphanisus in similar terms:

> τοῦτο μὲν πιττούμενος τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ γάρῳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ῥαινόμενος, τοῦτο δὲ ἀντὶ πλακοῦντος, τῶν ἄλλων ἄμητας ἐσθιόντων καὶ σησαμοῦντας, αὐτὸς μέλιτι δεδευμένους λίθους ἀποτρώγων. ἡ πασῶν δὲ ἰταμωτάτη, τὸ ἐκ Κεραμεικοῦ πορνίδιον … Ὑακινθίς, κύστιν αἵματος πληρώσασα καταφέρει μου τῆς κεφαλῆς …
>
> First my head got covered with pitch and my eyes got sprinkled with fish sauce, and then instead of a flat-cake, while the others were eating milk cakes and sesame cakes, I was nibbling stones drenched in honey. And then the boldest woman of all, the harlot from Kerameikos … Hyakinthis, filled up a bladder with blood and brought it down on top of my head … (3.12.2–3)

In these cases Alciphron takes to extremes the technique, which as we have seen is common in sympotic report letters, of introducing a note of scorn or reservation in one's description of a banquet, giving the impression that the values shared between writer and addressee greatly outweigh the writer's loyalty to the sympotic community being described. These letters also parody the kind of luxurious listing of foodstuffs which we have seen in, for example, Hippolochus' letter about the banquet of Caranus from Athenaeus Book 4.[27] In Alciphron's work those listing habits are infected with overtones of disgust and grotesquerie (just as they are infected by erotic overtones in the examples quoted from Book 4). In their denunciations of this kind of excessive behaviour they also several times express a yearning for frugal food which paradoxically brings them close to the traditions of philosophical denunciation of luxurious food in letter form, for example at 3.4.6:

> ἄμεινον γὰρ [ἐπὶ] θύμοις καὶ ἀλφίτοις διαβόσκειν τὴν γαστέρα, ὁμολογουμένην ἔχοντα τὴν τοῦ ζῆν ἀσφάλειαν, ἢ πεμμάτων ἀπολαύοντα καὶ φασιανῶν ὀρνίθων τὸν ἄδηλον ὁσημέραι θάνατον ἀπεκδέχεσθαι.

[27] Cf. Schmitz 2005: 101–102 on Alciphron's love of obscure vocabulary and its overlaps with the gastronomic compilations of Athenaeus.

> For it is better to feed my stomach with thyme and barley, having the guaranteed safety of staying alive, rather than anticipating every day an unseen death, while taking pleasure from cakes and pheasants.

These letters usually imply an almost unbridgeable gap between the elite symposiasts and the low-status parasites whose community Alciphron gives us access to. That gap becomes particularly obvious in 3.39. Here the letter-writer complains to his friend about having been made to wait to eat a delicious cake:

> Παρέκειτο μὲν ἡμῖν ὁ Γέλωνος τοῦ Σικελιώτου πλακοῦς ἐπώνυμος. ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ τῇ θέᾳ μόνον πρὸς τὰς καταπόσεις εὐτρεπιζόμενος εὐφραινόμην· μέλλησις δὲ ἦν πολλή, περιστεφόντων τραγημάτων τὰ πέμματα· ἦν δὲ ὁ καρπὸς τῆς πιστάκης καὶ βάλανοι φοινίκων καὶ κάρυα τῶν ἐλύτρων ἐξῃρημένα … οἱ δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐντραγεῖν ἐπὶ μήκιστον ἐξέτεινον καὶ ⟨τῆς⟩ κύλικος συνεχῶς περισοβουμένης διατριβὰς καὶ μελλησμοὺς ἐνεποίουν, καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκ συνθήματος τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναρτῶντες ἐπιθυμίαν ὁ μέν τις κάρφος λαβὼν ἐξεκάθαιρε τὰ ἐνιζάνοντα τῶν βρωμάτων τοῖς ὀδοῦσιν ἰνώδη, ὁ δὲ ὑπτιάσας ἑαυτὸν οἷος ἦν ὕπνῳ κατέχεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς τραπέζης φροντίζειν· εἶτα ἄλλος ἄλλα διελέγετο, καὶ πάντα μᾶλλον ἐπράττετο ἢ ὁ ἡδὺς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ποθητὸς ἐμοὶ πλακοῦς εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν ἤγετο.
>
> A cake lay before us, the kind which takes its name from Gelon the Siceliote. As for me, I was happy just at the sight of it, preparing myself to swallow it down. But there was a long delay, while the cake was being wreathed with sweetmeats: there were pistachio nuts and dates and walnuts taken out of their shells … Keeping my appetite in suspense as if by prearrangement, one of them would pick up a toothpick and start clearing out the fibrous bits of food lodged between his teeth, while another would lie back as if more interested in going to sleep than in paying attention to what was on the table; and then one of them would start talking (διελέγετο) about something and everything was being done other than bringing forward for enjoyment the sweet cake that I desired.

Here it is clear that the parasite is far removed from an understanding of elite custom: the mention of sympotic conversation (one of them would start talking (διελέγετο)) is presumably meant to remind us of traditions of philosophical speech in the symposium, but for this writer (and by implication for his addressee, who is addressed as if he is a kindred spirit) it is nothing more than a delaying factor to the fulfilment of his gluttonous desires. Here again, as so often, the letter is a safe space within which the writer can express his feelings about his alienness to the elite circles in which he moves.[28]

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[28] The obvious exception is 3.19 (which seems to be based on Lucian's *Symposium*, and has been much discussed for that reason); in this case the guests—philosophers—are like parasites because of their bad behavior; however even here the letter writer attempts to reinforce

Admittedly not all of the letters of Book 3 express disgruntlement—a few actually give very positive reports. In these cases, however, the reasons for the parasite's satisfaction once again set them firmly apart from elite identity. In 3.10, for example, the letter writer describes a dinner from which he has managed to steal an expensive napkin, and promises, if he manages to sell it, that "I will take you to the innkeeper Pithacnion and I will stuff you with food" (γαστριῶ σε ἀγαγὼν ἐπὶ τὸν πανδοκέα Πιθακ⟨ν⟩ίωνα, 3.10.4), anticipating an idealised moment of friendship far removed from the kind of exploitative and hostile elite commensality Alciphron depicts in most of the rest of Book 3. In 3.11, similarly, the letter writer prides himself on having successfully stolen a silver wine vessel. In this case, by contrast with 3.10, he anticipates his own elevation to the ranks of the elite—"I am so fanned by my hopes that I want to feed flatterers and to have parasites attending me, rather than being a parasite myself" (καὶ τοσοῦτον ῥιπίζομαι ταῖς ἐλπίσιν, ὡς ἐπιθυμεῖν κόλακας τρέφειν καὶ κεχρῆσθαι παρασίτοις, οὐ παρασιτεῖν αὐτός, 3.11.4)—but with such obvious naivety that his distance from elite status becomes all the more obvious. I have written elsewhere about the way in which Alciphron's characters, and especially his parasites, live poised perpetually between hope and disappointment, and the way in which that precarious balance is intended in part as a metaphor for our own experience as readers, indulging (as Alciphron's work tempts us to do) in the fantasy of being able to recapture classical Athens through literary imitation, while also being aware of the absurdity and difficulty of that enterprise.[29] This kind of blatantly naïve, self-deceiving description of sympotic experience—to which the letter form is particularly appropriate, with its capacity to conjure up an idealised image while also suggesting that it may be a mirage, a construction, a fantasy—contributes to that impression of a world of vain hope.

The way in which the letters construct an imaginary parasitical community insulated from the elite world is also clear, finally, in the many letters which refer to the topic of invitation. What Alciphron implies through these letters is that the polite exchange of conventional letters of invitation and acceptance is just the tip of an enormous iceberg of correspondence on that

his own separateness from his elite patrons, complaining about their violation of his own professional domain and noting that their misbehavior actually distracted attention from the parasites and other entertainers. Slater, in this volume, analyses how Lucian approaches issues of class and privilege in the *Saturnalian Letters*, which are similarly concerned with sympotic customs.

[29] See König 2007: 280–282; and cf. at more length König 2012: 251–265.

subject—at least in the imaginary world his parasites inhabit—most of it far removed from the dignity and formality of elite exchange. In 3.1, a parasite writes to his friend complaining about the slow passing of time in the lead-up to dinner, and trying to think of ways of hastening their invitation (including bending the sundial):

> ὡς νῦν ἐγώ σοι αὖος ὑπὸ λιμοῦ καὶ αὐχμηρός. Θεοχάρης δὲ οὐ πρότερον καταλαμβάνει τὴν στιβάδα πρὶν αὐτῷ τὸν οἰκέτην δραμόντα φράσαι τὴν ἕκτην ἑστάναι. δεῖ οὖν ἡμῖν τοιούτου σκέμματος, ὃ κατασοφίσασθαι καὶ παραλογίσασθαι τὴν τοῦ Θεοχάρους εὐταξίαν δυνήσεται.
>
> As things stand now I am parched and dried up from hunger. And Theochares doesn't recline on his couch until his servant runs in and tells him that the sixth hour has arrived. So we need the kind of plan which will be able to trick and outwit his orderly behaviour. (3.1.2–3)

The whole point of that letter is its outrageous distance from the standard categories of epistolary communication. In 3.2, a parasite describes how a rich host had invited him to dinner with the promise of rich food on condition that he passes on an invitation to the courtesan Aedonion, only to find that she is furious at not having been paid for a former assignation:

> ἴθι πρὸς Διός, εἶπεν, ὦ βέλτιστε, καὶ μετὰ βραχὺ λουσάμενος ἧκε ᾿Αηδόνιον ἡμῖν τὴν ἑταίραν ἄγων. ἔστι δέ μοι συνήθης ἐπιεικῶς καὶ μένει, πάντως οὐκ ἀγνοεῖς, μικρὸν ἄπωθεν τοῦ Λεωκορίου· δεῖπνον [τε] ἡμῖν ηὐτρέπισται γεννικὸν ἰχθὺς τεμαχίτης καὶ σταμνία τοῦ Μενδησίου νέκταρος, εἴποι τις ἄν, πεπληρωμένα. καὶ ὁ μὲν ταῦτα εἰπὼν ᾤχετο· ἐγὼ δὲ παρὰ τὴν ᾿Αηδόνιον δραμὼν καὶ φράσας παρ᾽ ὅτου καλοῖτο, ἐδέησα κινδύνῳ περιπεσεῖν … τὴν ὀργὴν ἔναυλον [ἐγκειμένην] ἔχουσα, πλήρη τὴν κακ⟨κ⟩άβην ἀποσπάσασα τῶν χυτροπόδων ἐδέησέ μου κατὰ τοῦ βρέγματος καταχέαι ζέοντος τοῦ ὕδατος …
>
> 'Go, by Zeus, my friend, and after a while, once you have bathed, come to my house bringing with you the courtesan Aedonion. She is rather a close friend of mine and she lives, as you are certainly not unaware, a little way off from the Leocorion. An excellent dinner has been prepared for us, sliced fish and jars filled with Mendesian nectar, as one might call it'. He said this and went away; and I ran to the house of Aedonion and told her who had invited her, and I only just avoided getting myself into trouble. For … having her anger fresh in her mind, taking a full pot off the pot-stand, she nearly succeeded in pouring it down on my head, with the water still boiling. (3.2.2–3)

In 3.8, a parasite expresses his anger at the way in which a rival is attracting all the invitations:

> ῾Ημῶν ὡς Μεγαρέων ἢ Αἰγιέων οὐδεὶς λόγος, εὐδοκιμεῖ δὲ τὰ νῦν Γρυλλίων μόνος καὶ κατέχει τὸ ἄστυ, καὶ πᾶσα αὐτῷ καθάπερ Κράτητι τῷ Θήβηθεν κυνὶ ἀνέῳγεν [ἡ] οἰκία. ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν, Θετταλίδα τινὰ γραῦν ἢ ᾿Ακαρνανίδα φαρμακεύτριαν πεπορισμένος καταγοητεύει τοὺς ἀθλίους νεανίσκους. τί γὰρ καὶ στωμύλον ἔχει; τί δὲ ὁμιλητικὸν καὶ ἡδὺ φέρει;

> No-one pays any attention to us, as if we came from Megara or Aegieon. Gryllion is the only one who is highly esteemed now, and holds the attention of the town and every house is open to him as if he were Crates the Cynic from Thebes. My guess is that he is bewitching the poor young men, having got hold of a sorceress from Thessaly or Acarnania. For what kind of urbanity does he have? What kind of charm and pleasure does he contribute? (3.8.1–2)

In 3.13, similarly, a parasite complains in general terms about a scarcity of invitations and resolves to hang himself, but then decides before doing so to wait for one last party,

> … ὁ περίβλεπτος οὗτος καὶ ἀοίδιμος ἔσται γάμος Χαριτοῦς καὶ Λεωκράτους, μετὰ τὴν ἕνην καὶ νέαν τοῦ Πυανεψιῶνος, εἰς ὃν πάντως ἢ παρὰ τὴν πρώτην ἡμέραν ἢ τοῖς ἐπαυλίοις κεκλήσομαι.
>
> … that much discussed and much admired wedding of Charito and Leocrates, immediately after the last day of the month of Pyanepsion, to which I shall certainly be invited, either for the first day or the day after.

In all of these cases the polite conventions of elite invitation exchanges are undermined. Alciphron shows us a world where conventional invitation letters are not, as they give the impression of being, the whole story. Beneath their dignified surface we are invited to imagine a more complicated network of communication, a frenzy of sub-elite correspondence on sympotic subjects, full of people complaining about invitations and speculating about invitations in ways which give a much less flattering view of the relations between hosts and guests. In all of these letters between parasites there is a sense of camaraderie which is far more sincere and more intimate than the unequal relationships the parasites experience in the sympotic occasions they report. The letter, so Alciphron seems to be suggesting, tells the real story, bringing to light voices and perspectives which have to remain unspoken in the stilted arena of sympotic role-playing. The intimacy and immediacy of the letter form trumps the idealisation of imagined community which was so central to ancient views of the symposium.

V. Conclusions

My conclusions are not, perhaps, particularly surprising ones. I have argued, first of all, that one of the key attractions of the letter form for ancient culture was its capacity to conjure up idealised images of community between writer and addressee. Others have made that point before, from ancient epistolary theorists onwards, but I hope to have shown here that Alciphron's work offers us one of the best surviving examples of that kind of epistolary

conjuration in action. I have also argued that Alciphron's work shows us how that feature of the letter form causes it to have a rather ambiguous relationship with banquets and symposia, which were similarly viewed as spaces for creating privileged spaces of elite community and elite luxury. Sometimes the letter is viewed as the ideal vehicle for conveying an impression of sympotic experience; just as often, however, in Alciphron and elsewhere, the vividness and intimacy of epistolary address stand in conflict with the sympotic world, subverting it and drowning it out. That is one of the things which makes the letter an ideal form for Alciphron's project of presenting a world which is parasitic upon but also utterly separate from the world of elite self-presentation.

I have also argued, secondly, that we should be more ready to take account of the way in which Alciphron was working with a "sub-genre" of sympotic letter writing which would have been widely familiar to his readers—or rather a range of epistolary sub-genres, given the wide variety of different traditions I surveyed in the first half of this chapter, and given the variety of different approaches taken by Alciphron himself in Book 3 and elsewhere.[30] The fact that those traditions have been so little discussed in Alciphron scholarship is symptomatic of a wider lack of interest in the effects of epistolary narrative. That lack of interest perhaps reflects the fact that our own modern culture—used to easy communication by telephone, email, radio and television—is not so well placed to appreciate the letter's capacity to transmit voices and experiences across geographical space, which was one of the key reasons for its power over the ancient imagination.

[30] For more general discussion of how far the concept of "genre" is helpful for ancient letters, see Hodkinson 2007: 283–288 and 2009: 27–56.

LUCIAN'S SATURNALIAN EPISTOLARITY

Niall W. Slater

Lucian's *Saturnalia* is itself Saturnalian in form, a heteroglossic collection of dialogue, law, and letters, to which the disparate voices of the letter collection form the contradictory conclusion. Moreover it treats in Greek an institution profoundly Roman: a seven-day festival in which existing authority is overturned and the lost golden age restored.[1] One might be tempted to see in Lucian's *Saturnalia* a perfect metaphor for the Second Sophistic, conventionally seen as a profound cultural yearning for the greatness of past authority and a program for bolstering Greek identity under the empire but here made acutely and ironically self-aware of the limits to resurrecting lost golden ages. The goal of the present study must be considerably more modest: to examine how the letters reshape the narrative implicit in the earlier sections, tantalizing the reader with the prospect of "overhearing" a god at work.[2] Taken together, however, the letters instantiate and explicate the inversions and evasions of power and responsibility that the festival of the Saturnalia itself put in play.

Lucian's *Saturnalia* consists of three parts: a dialogue between a priest of Saturn/ Cronus and his god and boss; then a narrative by a priest named Cronosolon of his encounter with Cronus and the laws for the festival he was inspired to promulgate; and finally a collection of four ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΚΡΟΝΙΚΑΙ: one to Cronus, followed by his direct reply, then Cronus's letter to the rich with their reply. While some have found this structure problematic and even attempted to argue for separate works, there is a temporal and narrative logic to the whole.[3] In order to appreciate the function of the letters, we must first look briefly at the preceding parts, beginning with the dialogue.

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[1] While the official day of the Saturnalia was 17th December, by Cicero's time the festivities lasted seven days. Augustus cut the public celebration to three days, but it gradually lengthened again under the empire (Dio Cassius 60.25.8). Balsdon 1969: 124–126 remains useful. See König, above p. 190, on another Lucianic dialogue, the *Symposium*; and the contributions by Bär and Rosenmeyer (pp. 66–68) on letters in Lucian's *Verae Historiae*.

[2] For epistolary narrative allowing the reader to "overhear" or "eavesdrop" on characters' otherwise inaccessible thoughts, see the Introduction to this volume (pp. 3 and 14), and the contributions by Gordon (p. 142), Bär (pp. 226–227), and Repath (p. 237).

[3] See Anderson 1976: 152–154, with summary of previous discussions.

Here are the opening gambits on each side:

> ΙΕΡΕΥΣ
> Ὦ Κρόνε, σὺ γὰρ ἔοικας ἄρχειν τό γε νῦν εἶναι καὶ σοὶ τέθυται καὶ κεκαλλιέρηται παρ' ἡμῶν, τί ἂν μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν αἰτήσας λάβοιμι παρὰ σοῦ;
>
> ΚΡΟΝΟΣ
> Τοῦτο μὲν αὐτόν σε καλῶς ἔχει ἐσκέφθαι ὅ τι σοι εὐκτέον, εἰ μὴ καὶ μάντιν ἅμα ἐθέλεις εἶναι τὸν ἄρχοντα, εἰδέναι τί σοι ἥδιον αἰτεῖν. ἐγὼ δὲ τά γε δυνατὰ οὐκ ἀνανεύσω πρὸς τὴν εὐχήν.[4] (*Sat.* 6)
>
> Priest:
> Cronus, since you seem to be in charge now, and we've sacrificed and gotten favorable omens, what exactly in return for these sacrifices would I get from you if I asked?
>
> Cronus:
> It's better if you figure out what you're praying for, unless you want your ruler to be a prophet too, and know to ask what would really please you. And I, as far as I can, won't deny your request.

Here is "*do ut des*" religion at its cagiest, the priest hoping for the best Cronus might have to offer, and Cronus trying to keep the bidding down. The priest then confesses he wants land, slaves, and movable wealth, to which Cronus instantly replies that these are not in his power or job description (οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸν διανέμειν τὰ τοιαῦτα), and the priest should apply to Zeus. Cronus goes on to explain that he really rules for seven days only, and his power only extends to governing his own festival. Herein lies the fundamental comic premise for the whole work. The priest's dilemma turns out to be the one so well formulated by Woody Allen: "God is not dead; he's just an underachiever." He has appealed to Zeus already, to no good effect, and still wants to know what Cronus can do for him. He rejects Cronus's promises of success in dicing and drinking at the festival and asks instead for knowledge: specifically, the truth of traditional accounts of how Zeus overthrew Cronus and chained him in Tartarus. Cronus indignantly rejects the question as Saturnalian impudence in and of itself but when pressed further insists that he gave up power voluntarily:

> οὔτε ὁ Ζεὺς βίᾳ τὴν ἀρχήν, ἑκόντος δέ μου παραδόντος αὐτῷ καὶ ὑπεκστάντος, ἄρχει. (*Sat.* 6)
>
> Nor does Zeus rule by force, but I willingly handed over to him and abdicated.

[4] The texts of Lucian used here are drawn from the Loeb edition, for the *Saturnalia* Kilburn 1987. Translations are my own, though for the *Saturnalia* much informed by Kilburn's.

And why abdicate? Because he was old and gouty (γέρων ἤδη καὶ ποδαγρὸς, 7) and tired of dealing both with humanity's misdeeds and its prayers (οὔτε τοῖς εὐχομένοις χρηματίζοντα, 7).[5] Zeus gets all the problems, while Cronus reserves for himself only his few days of sovereignty to remind mankind of what life was like in the lost golden age of wine, milk, and honey, of songs and games and ἰσοτιμία, for the culminating quality of that age is that there was no slavery (οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐμοῦ δοῦλος ἦν, 7).

The priest has more questions, but Cronus insists they have wasted good drinking time already, and the priest finally agrees, merely noting in conclusion his plans to write up their conversation:

> καί μοι δοκῶ γραψάμενος εἰς βιβλίον ταύτην ἡμῶν τὴν συνουσίαν ἅ τε αὐτὸς ἠρώτησα καὶ σὺ πρὸς ταῦτα ἵλεως ἀπεκρίνω παρέξειν ἀναγνῶναι τῶν φίλων, ὅσοι γ' ἐπακοῦσαι τῶν σῶν λόγων ἄξιοι. (*Sat.* 9)
>
> I think I'll write up our conversation in a book, what I asked and you so kindly answered, to give to my friends to read, at least those worthy of hearing your words.

This initial dialogue has established a number of themes that carry on through the rest of the work: the ubiquity of human avarice, Cronus's status as a semi-retired god, and an incipient concern with restoring the festival of the Saturnalia to its original simplicity and innocence. Though self-interested and materially motivated, the priest is also self-aware, remarking at one point that if the golden beings who populated the golden age were to return, they would be ripped apart like Pentheus for the wealth they embodied (*Sat.* 9).

The reference to writing at the end is worth further attention. The priest's final comments provide not just an aetiology for the rest of the work but establish a particular relation to the reader: we who read are worthy of hearing the words, even if ἄξιοι may be a double-edged term under the circumstances.

The next section, now dubbed Κρονοσόλον, begins with a reference to reading and writing as well:

> Τάδε λέγει Κρονοσόλον ἱερεὺς καὶ προφήτης τοῦ Κρόνου καὶ νομοθέτης τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν ἑορτήν.

[5] Similarly in the opening of the *Bis Accusatus*, Lucian portrays Zeus as complaining about his overwork in running the universe, where the most burdensome thing of all (τὸ πάντων ἐπιπονώτατον, 2) is simultaneously supervising sacrifice at Olympia and war in Babylon, while sending hail to the Getae and attending a banquet with the Aethiopians, all of which explains the slowness of divine justice. This Zeus, however, has no retirement plans.

> ἃ μὲν τοὺς πένητας χρὴ ποιεῖν, αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις ἔπεμψα ἄλλο βιβλίον, ἐγγράψας, καὶ εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι ἐμμενοῦσι κἀκεῖνοι τοῖς νόμοις ... (*Sat.* 10)
>
> Cronosolon, priest and prophet of Cronus and lawgiver for festival matters proclaims the following:
>
> What the poor must do I have already sent as another book to them, writing it up, and I know well that they will abide by those laws ...

There is disruption rather than segue here, however, which we should take as deliberate rather than a sign of carelessness. The book already sent to the poor is not the previous dialogue; rather, it is a work suppressed at the very moment we learn of its existence. It creates a temporal space, for the writer who now names himself Cronosolon seems likely to be the priest in the previous dialogue, and presumably he has written and sent laws to the poor since that dialogue.[6] The dismissive reference to a work we will never read thus suppresses the poor in the narrative, just as they are suppressed in the present degenerate state of the festival—though they will return later.

Cronosolon claims direct divine inspiration for the laws he proclaims from:

> Κρόνον αὐτόν, ὅς με προείλετο νομοθετῆσαι ἐς τὴν ἑορτὴν οὐκ ὄναρ ἐπιστάς, ἀλλὰ πρῴην ἐγρηγορότι ἐναργὴς συγγενόμενος (*Sat.* 10)
>
> Cronus himself, who has appointed me as lawgiver for the festival, not appearing as a dream, but talking with me the day before yesterday when I was fully awake.

Cronosolon thus has experienced the personal communication accorded poets and prophets such as Hesiod, rather than the more recent methods of dream epiphanies.[7] While Cronus's appearance is indeed divinely radiant (φαιδρός) and royally attired (βασιλικῶς ἐνεσκεύασατο), his manner of address is not quite the usual divine standard. He comes up behind Cronosolon as he walks miserably through the cold winter weather, grabs him by the ear, and shakes him (καὶ τοῦ ὠτός μου λαβόμενος καὶ διασείσας, 11)! He thus treats his priest like a slave. That is minor, however, compared to his

[6] Perhaps this is a first, subtle example of a "pseudo-documentary" effect in the text—citation of other written materials, even lost ones, imparts an air of authenticity to the text at hand. On pseudo-documentarism in ancient fiction, see Hansen 2003 and Ní Mheallaigh 2008; see further below, n. 13, and the chapters by Bär, Morgan, Repath, and Kasprzyk for letters in fiction as "documentary".

[7] On dream epiphanies, see Hägg 2002. Compare for another fictional representation, Priapus and Neptune appearing to Lichas and Tryphaena in dreams in Petronius, *Satyrica* 104.

threats against the rich. He dictates to his priest laws providing that the rich must share at his festival—or face the prospect of the same treatment he accorded his father Ouranos (εὐνουχίζων, 12). The laws directed to the rich are divided into three categories: first, general prohibitions of work during the festival; second, prescriptions for sacrifices and gift-giving whereby the rich must give to those less well off, not their peers; and finally, rules for feasting at the festival, providing equal treatment for all guests. Other provisions aiming at the redistribution of wealth down the social scale are scattered through the three sections.

This section of the *Saturnalia* ends with another intriguing act of writing:

> Τοὺς νόμους τούτους ἕκαστον τῶν πλουσίων ἐγγράψαντα ἐς χαλκῆν στήλην ἔχειν ἐν μεσαιτάτῳ τῆς αὐλῆς, καὶ ἀναγιγνωσκέτω. δεῖ δὲ εἰδέναι ὅτι ἔστ' ἂν αὕτη ἡ στήλη μένῃ, οὔτε λιμὸς οὔτε πυρκαιὰ οὔτε ἄλλο χαλεπὸν οὐδὲν εἴσεισεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῖς. (*Sat.* 18)
>
> Each and every rich man must write down these laws on a bronze stele to keep in the middle of his atrium—and read them. And let it be known that, so long as this stele remains, neither famine nor pestilence nor fire nor any other ill shall enter their house.

Composed like a public law code, these regulations must be set up in private interior space: on the public and eternal medium of bronze[8] but promising private and personal protection for those who read and obey.

The concluding section of the *Saturnalia* and the one of interest for epistolary strategies suggests how this will all work out. It is a collection of four paired letters: one from an initially uncharacterised *ego*, followed by Cronus's reply, then an open letter from Cronus to "the rich", followed by their reply. The only framing for the letters, other than the preceding parts of the *Saturnalia*, are the salutations for the letters:

1. ΕΓΩ ΚΡΟΝΩΙ ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ
2. ΚΡΟΝΟΣ ΕΜΟΙ ΤΩΙ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΑΤΩΙ ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ
3. ΚΡΟΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΛΟΥΣΙΟΙΣ ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ
4. ΟΙ ΠΛΟΥΣΙΟΙ ΤΩΙ ΚΡΟΝΩΙ ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ

These formal features as well as the notion that they form a collection sufficiently establish the genre.[9] Still, formal features here do not suffice to suppress the reader's sense of incongruity, indeed absurdity. The technology of writing allowed ancient letters to function as "vehicles for bringing

8 See Williamson 1987 for the contemporary cultural impact of inscriptions on bronze.

9 Trapp 2003: 1 offers a widely accepted set of criteria. Gibson and Morrison 2007 esp. 16 emphasize the importance of the collection itself as interpretive frame.

connection and control across geographical space,"[10] yet as Janet Altman's classic study points out:

> The letter is a both-and, either-or phenomenon, signifying either bridge or barrier, both presence and absence.[11]

The joke of writing a letter to a god—and expecting a reply—exposes precisely the gap that the previous sections tried to bridge. The unnamed priest of the first section spoke effortlessly with his god. Cronosolon, at least on his own testimony, received a personal appearance. The humble author of the first letter here must just put pen to papyrus and hope.

We may not be meant to contemplate other absurdities of this miniature collection on first reading. Probably the *ego* has collected and published the letters—or at least the first two. Indeed, within the fiction he must have written or re-written the salutation for the second letter, since Cronus would not have written EMOI, which already sets up the irony of ΤΩΙ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΑΤΩΙ.[12] But more of that later.

The first letter begins with more games about writing:

> Ἐγεγράφειν μὲν ἤδη καὶ πρότερον δηλῶν ἐν οἷς εἴην καὶ ὡς ὑπὸ πενίας κινδυνεύοιμι μόνος ἄμοιρος εἶναι τῆς ἑορτῆς, ἣν ἐπήγγελκας, ἔτι καὶ τοῦτο προσθεὶς—μέμνημαι γάρ—ἀλογώτατον εἶναι τοὺς μὲν ἡμῶν ὑπερπλουτεῖν ... (*Sat.* 19)
>
> I wrote to you earlier, explaining my situation and how my poverty put me in danger of alone being without a share in the festival you proclaimed, and adding this also—for I remember—that it was senseless for some of us to be filthy rich ...

As in the previous section, the opening here implies a missing piece of earlier writing, a letter of complaint not in the collection—and apparently lost, since the writer must quote it from memory (μέμνημαι γάρ).[13] It went unanswered (ἐπεὶ δέ μοι τότε οὐδὲν ἀντεπέστειλας, 19), so he undertakes to write again. He employs a striking image for the extremes of poverty and wealth in his society and Fortune's failure to be fair:

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[10] König 2007: 261.

[11] Altman 1982: 189. Cf. Jenkins 2006 esp. 9. On absence or separation as motif in epistolary literature see further in this volume the Introduction (pp. 11–14) and discussions by Repath (p. 237), Kasprzyk (p. 267), Hodkinson (p. 332), and McLarty (p. 377).

[12] On the frequent alteration or omission of epistolary formulae when letters are included in collections or other texts, see further in this volume Kasprzyk (p. 269) and Hodkinson (pp. 328–329).

[13] See above, n. 6, for the "pseudo-documentary" effect implied.

> μᾶλλον δὲ τραγικὸν ὑποκριτὴν ἐννόησον θατέρῳ μὲν τοῖν ποδοῖν ἐφ' ὑψηλοῦ βεβηκότα, οἷοι εἰσι τραγικοὶ ἐμβάται, ὁ δ' ἕτερος ἀνυπόδητος ἔστω. εἰ τοίνυν βαδίζοι οὕτως ἔχων, ὁρᾷς ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῷ ἄρτι μὲν ὑψηλῷ, ἄρτι δὲ ταπεινῷ γενέσθαι, καθ' ὁπότερον ἂν πόδα προβαίνῃ. τοσοῦτον κἀν τῷ βίῳ ἡμῶν τὸ ἄνισον· καὶ οἱ μὲν ὑποδησάμενοι ἐμβάτας τῆς Τύχης χορηγούσης ἐντραγῳδοῦσιν ἡμῖν, οἱ πολλοὶ δὲ πεζῇ καὶ χαμαὶ βαδίζομεν δυνάμενοι ἄν, εὖ ἴσθι, μὴ χεῖρον αὐτῶν ὑποκρίνεσθαι καὶ διαβαίνειν, εἴ τις καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐνεσκεύασε παραπλησίως ἐκείνοις. (*Sat.* 19)

> Or rather imagine a tragic actor, walking with one of his feet on something lofty, like tragic platform shoes, and the other barefoot. Now if he should walk in that condition, you see that necessarily he would now be aloft, now down low, according to which foot he put forward. Just so is inequality in our life: some strap on the platform shoes that Fortune the producer provides and strut their hour upon the stage, but many of us go barefoot on the ground, even though we, as you well know, could perform and posture no worse than they, if only someone would costume us as well as those.

The metaphor that "all the world's a stage" goes back to the mid-Hellenistic period, but the image of the unfortunate actor with only one high-soled shoe, bobbing up and down as he walks, is certainly novel.

A rather standard lament for the lost golden age of milk and honey follows, wherein the writer identifies himself for the first time as one of the poor (ἡμῖν τοῖς πένησι, 20).[14] He claims that having to watch the rich enjoy themselves is the most painful part and asks Cronus to force the rich to share both clothing and food with them. If not, he as a representative of the poor says that they will pray that the servants of the rich will fail and maltreat them at their feasts and that the meat being roasted for them will, like Helios's cattle, jump up and run away.[15] The maledictions become ever more extravagant: that Indian ants will dig up and carry off the gold of the rich, mice chew holes in their clothes, and, worst of all, that their handsome young serving boys turn into ugly comic slaves:

> παῖδας δὲ αὐτῶν τοὺς ὡραίους καὶ κομήτας, οὓς Ὑακίνθους ἢ Ἀχιλλέας ἢ Ναρκίσους ὀνομάζουσι, μεταξὺ ὀρέγοντας σφίσι τὸ ἔκπωμα φαλακροὺς γίγνεσθαι ὑπορρεούσης τῆς κόμης καὶ πώγονα φύειν ὀξύν, οἷοι εἰσιν ἐν ταῖς κωμῳδίαις οἱ σφηνοπώγονες … (*Sat.* 24)

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[14] The class consciousness of the plural here is rather different from strategies in literary letters from lovers, such as Philostratus, *Epistulae Eroticae* (text and numeration from the Loeb edition, Benner and Fobes 1949), where the authors invoke their individual poverty for pathos: ὅτι πένης εἰμί, ἀτιμότερος σοι δοκῶ ("Because I'm poor, I seem quite unworthy to you," 7); εἰ μὲν οὖν δέῃ χρημάτων, πένης εἰμί, εἰ δὲ φιλίας καὶ χρηστοῦ τρόπου, πλουτῶ ("So if you ask for money, I'm poor, but in friendship and worth, I'm rich," 23).

[15] See Jonassen 1990: 61–65 on these Golden Age themes.

> that their handsome long-haired slave boys, whom they call Hyacinth or Achilles or Narcissus, in the middle of serving them a cup turn bald with their hair falling out and grow a pointed beard, such as the spade-bearded slaves in comedy have …

Cronus's reply begins on an aggressively unsympathetic note, responding to the threats of the first letter, but also forfeiting at once any sense of dignity:

> τί ταῦτα ληρεῖς, ὦ οὗτος, ἐμοὶ περὶ τῶν παρόντων ἐπιστέλλων καὶ ἀναδασμὸν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιεῖν κελεύων; τὸ δὲ ἑτέρου ἂν εἴη, τοῦ νῦν ἄρχοντος. (*Sat.* 25)

> You there, why are you raving, writing me letters and ordering me to make a redistribution of goods? That would be somebody else's job: the current ruler's.

The conventions of epistolary exchange with those in power would lead a reader to expect an official letter in reply, projecting the authoritative presence or *parousia* of Cronus.[16] Instead, this carping salutation establishes precisely the point Cronus wishes to make: his own lack of authority. Moreover, although he echoes the argument used earlier in the work ("it's not my job, take it up with Zeus"), Cronus seems personally to identify with the problems of the rich, for he explains his own abdication of power as a means of avoiding such difficulties:

> ἐπεί τοι οἴει με αὐτὸν οὕτως ἄν ποτε κορυβαντιᾶσαι, ὡς εἰ καλὸν ἦν τὸ πλουτεῖν καὶ βασιλεύειν, ἀφέντα ἂν αὐτὰ καὶ παραχωρήσαντα ἄλλοις καθῆσαι ἰδιωτεύοντα καὶ ἀνέχεσθαι ὑπ' ἄλλῳ ταττόμενον; ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα εἰδώς, ἃ τοῖς πλουσίοις καὶ ἄρχουσι προσεῖναι ἀνάγκη, ἀφῆκα τὴν ἀρχὴν εὖ ποιῶν. (*Sat.* 27)

> You'd surely think me crazy, if wealth and kingship was a good thing, for letting these things go and, after giving way to others, sitting there like a private citizen and putting up with being ruled by another; but knowing the many things which the rich and the rulers must put up with, I did well in abdicating my rule.

Cronus's very powerlessness then is a deliberately chosen response to the problems of being rich and powerful.

Cronus's letter also offers a very intriguing twist on the "all the world's a stage" conceit employed by the poor in their appeal. Where they have claimed all men are created alike inside but just costumed differently for different social roles, Cronus literally turns this metaphor inside out—by asking the poor to look at and *into* a representative of the rich:

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[16] On *parousia* in official correspondence, see briefly Stirewalt 1993: 4–6, with further references. For official correspondence, see Olson, this volume (p. 362); for another fictional imitation of official correspondence, see Morgan, this volume (pp. 305–306).

> ὁλόχρυσον μὲν τὰ ἔξω, κατάρραφον δὲ τὰ ἔνδον, ὥσπερ αἱ τραγικαὶ ἐσθῆτες ἐκ ῥακῶν πάνυ εὐτελῶν συγκεκαττυμέναι. (*Sat.* 28)
>
> the exterior all gold, but cobbled together inside, just like tragic costumes stitched together out of quite worthless rags.

According to Cronus then, public splendor conceals private misery. Moreover, Cronus sees a co-dependence between rich and poor. What would be the consequence if the poor were to deny the rich attention and despise them (ὑπερεωρᾶτε αὐτῶν καὶ κατεφρονεῖτε, *Sat.* 29)?

> εὖ ἴστε, αὐτοὶ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἰόντες ἐδέοντο συνδειπνεῖν, ὡς ἐπιδείξαιντο ὑμῖν τὰς κλίνας καὶ τὰς τραπέζας καὶ τὰ ἐκπώματα, ὧν οὐδεν ὄφελος, εἰ ἀμάρτυρος ἡ κτῆσις εἴη. (*Sat.* 29)
>
> You can be sure that the rich themselves would come begging to you with dinner invitations, so they could show off to you their couches and tables and drinking vessels, which have no use if their ownership has no audience.

In fact, the rich primarily use their possessions to amaze (θαυμάζοιτε, *Sat.* 30) the poor. Cronus closes with a renewed promise to write to the rich:

> πλὴν ἐπιστελῶ γε αὐτοῖς ὥσπερ ὑπεσχόμην, καὶ οἶδ' ὅτι οὐκ ὀλιγωρήσουσι τῶν ἐμῶν γραμμάτων. (*Sat.* 30)
>
> Yet I'll write to them, as I promised, and I know they won't disregard what I write.

The first pair of letters therefore closes with apparent result—not all that the poor man wanted by any means, but the promise of some epistolary action at any rate.

That promise generates the next pair of letters, as the petitioned Cronus becomes the petitioner to the rich. Cronus's letter begins with a summary of his exchange with "the poor"[17] and an endorsement of their views as "reasonable" (μέτρια, *Sat.* 32). He takes up and expands their arguments about ill treatment at feasts and adds his own argument about the co-dependent need of the rich for admirers (θαυμάζοντας, *Sat.* 33) of their wealth. He then gets a bit carried away with the rhetoric of advocacy:

> ἰδέτωσαν οὖν πολλοὶ καὶ θαυμασάτωσαν ὑμῶν τὸν ἄργυρον ... μεταξὺ πίνοντες περισκοπείτωσαν τὸ ἔκπωμα καὶ τὸ βάρος ἵστωσαν αὐτοὶ διαβαστάσαντες καὶ τῆς ἱστορίας τὸ ἀκριβὲς καὶ τὸν χρυσὸν ὅσος, ὃς ἐπανθεῖ τῇ τέχνῃ. (*Sat.* 33)
>
> So let lots of them see and admire your silverware ... while they're drinking let them scrutinize the cup and estimate the weight for themselves, considering the accuracy of the story and how much gold adorns it with skill.

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[17] οἱ πένητες, *Sat.* 31, a tacit acceptance of the first writer's status as a representative.

This vision of the poor as good judges of both skill in metalwork as well as mythological accuracy nicely exposes what Hodkinson argues is a basic source of humour in literary letters of the Second Sophistic: the fictional letter-writer's "lack of awareness of the addressee's character and consequent likely response …".[18] Not content with this picture, Cronus takes the power of the poor to curse the rich as quite real: if they do so, the roast boar and the birds on the table will get up and escape while:

> οἱ ὡραιότατοι τῶν οἰνοχόων φαλακροὶ ἐν ἀκαρεῖ τοῦ χρόνου ὑμῖν γενήσονται. (*Sat.* 35)
>
> The most attractive of your wine-pourers will in an instant go bald!

The reply of the rich demonstrates that Cronus is not only an ineffective advocate but an inexperienced reader of complaint letters:

> πρὸς γὰρ σὲ οἴει μόνον ὑπὸ τῶν πενήτων ταῦτα γεγράφθαι, ὦ Κρόνε, οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς ἤδη ἐκκεκώφηται πρὸς αὐτῶν ἀναβοώντων καὶ αὐτὰ δὴ ταῦτα τὸν ἀναδασμὸν ἀξιούντων γενέσθαι …; (*Sat.* 36)
>
> Do you think you're the only one who gets these letters from the poor, Cronus? Hasn't Zeus himself gone deaf from them shouting and demanding just this redistribution of wealth …?

The rich claim to have considered everything in Cronus's written petition (ἅπαντα πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν λαβόντες ἃ γέγραφας), but they reject the poor's claims as inaccurate. They used to welcome the poor to their Saturnalian feasts, but their impoverished guests had no self-control and began behaving boorishly—and then lied about it. In fact, the poor do not care about eating, only about drinking to excess, pawing the serving staff or even the women of the family—and then being sick.[19] As proof of their account, they appeal to Cronus's experience as a fellow host:

> τὸν ὑμέτερον παράσιτον ἀναμνήσθητι τὸν Ἰξίονα, ὃς ἀξιωθεὶς κοινῆς τραπέζης, ἀξίωμα ἔχων ἴσον ὑμῖν, τῇ Ἥρᾳ μεθυσθεὶς ἐπεχείρει ὁ γενναῖος (*Sat.* 38)
>
> Remember that parasite of yours, Ixion, given a place at the shared table, being ranked equal to you—and then when drunk put his hands on Hera—such a nice guy!

This is not their final word, however. The rich close with a promise to welcome the poor back to their banquets in the future, if only they will moder-

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[18] Hodkinson 2007: 296 n. 36, remarking also on "the often self-centred nature of epistolary activity".

[19] Compare here the discussion of König (this volume, pp. 193–205) of retrospective banquet descriptions in letters.

ate their demands (μετρίων δεήσεσθαι, *Sat.* 38)) and behave like friends rather than flatterers and parasites. With this imprecise and conditional promise, their short reply closes.

Paired letters are less common than those without replies, even in literary collections, so Lucian's two pairs here are carefully and deliberately structured. At first glance, it looks as though the unnamed poor man's letter to the god of the lost golden age has simply garnered a refusal, based on the already established premise that "it's not my job." In fact, it does generate action, in the form of another letter. In advocating for both the poor and the traditional form of his own festival, the semi-retired deity morphs into an advocate willing to exaggerate any arguments or evidence to hand in pursuit of his cause. The result is a Saturnalian inversion of divine human relations, as the rich end up explaining to the god why one cannot believe all that the poor say and only promising better behavior in the future, conditional on the poor changing their ways.

In conclusion, the humour of the implicit narrative in Lucian's *Saturnalia* builds through the changes in form. His depiction of the oppression of the poor in this work has been taken as serious social satire of the "atmosphere of class hatred and violence"[20] of the Greek east in his day, and one should not minimize the hardships of the majority of the population. At the same time, the epistolary form at the end points the satire in an additional direction. Cronus's withdrawal from ruling the universe is modelled in three different stages, from apparently direct interlocutor with his priest to epiphanic lawgiver to distant correspondent. Lucian is quite happy elsewhere to use the traditional divine machinery of messenger gods and other strategies in sending up the world of myth.[21] At the end Cronus confines himself to functioning primarily as a literate (and metaliterary) deity, with all the problems inherent in that choice. Letters to him can easily fail to arrive (note the poor man's lost first petition, quoted from memory). As Jenkins in a study of how letters can go astray argues, "more than any other type of writing, letters emphasise the gap—whether temporal or spatial—between any sender and recipient: epistles are both emblematic of the gap and of human attempts to transcend it."[22] Paradoxically, the deposed Cronus is more modern in his methods than his successor Zeus, who is "deafened"

20 Baldwin 1961: 207.

21 See Anderson 1976: 154 on Lucian's use of "divine messengers, magical feathers or allegorical women [to] link one scene to the next".

22 Jenkins 2006: 9.

(ἐκκεκώφηται, 36) by oral petitions as well as letters.[23] Hodkinson again notes that "literary epistles must draw on distinct and recognizable features of real letters in order to count as such,"[24] and while we may not have their precise exemplars to hand, we can see the legions of both complainants and buck-passing bureaucrats, indeed the whole squeaky apparatus of empire, behind the unnamed poor man and Cronus in their correspondence. Cronus proves himself the real survivor here, able to explain both why it is not his job to do anything about the problem and carefully documenting how he passed the problem on to somebody else. He may have commanded the rich to put up his regulations on bronze stelai in their houses, but his own example is the real *monumentum aere perennius*.

23 Cronus then may be the universal ruler "translated" from the world of myth to the present, as Bär (this volume) argues Odysseus's letter to Kalypso moves him from the world of Homeric poetry to contemporary prose. Lucian also describes Apollo as "deafened" (τὰ ὦτα ἐκκεκώφηται) by requests for prophecies in *Bis Accusatus* 1.

24 Hodkinson 2007: 285.

PART II

INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION IN EPISTOLARY NARRATIVES

B. *Embedded Letters in Longer Fictions*

ODYSSEUS' LETTER TO CALYPSO IN LUCIAN'S *VERAE HISTORIAE*[*]

Silvio F. Bär

Lucian's *Verae Historiae* (*VH*) is one of the most intriguing and fascinating, but also one of the most puzzling and enigmatic prose texts of the Second Sophistic, if not in all of ancient literature.[1] It will therefore come as no surprise that it is also amongst the most hotly disputed texts within Lucian's œuvre as far as its meaning and understanding and especially its classification, its belonging to a specific literary genre is concerned. In this context, a particularly contentious matter is the question as to whether or not—and if so, in which ways—the *VH* is meant to be read as a parody.[2] It is, however,

[*] My thanks go to Owen Hodkinson and Patricia Rosenmeyer for inviting me to contribute to this volume and making a many useful suggestion for its improvement, to Manuel Baumbach and (at least two) anonymous referees for critically reading the paper at earlier stages, to Karen Ní Mheallaigh for giving me access to her unpublished doctoral thesis, and to Kathy Courtney for her invaluable help with my English.

[1] Despite the fact that in the past, the *VH* has attracted significant scholarly, as well as popular interest, it is only within the last decade that three books have been published which are solely devoted to this text: Rütten 1997 was the first to write a monograph on the *VH*, focusing on the comical aspect of the text. The commentary by Georgiadou and Larmour 1998 is mainly concerned with intertextual and linguistic allusions and references. Von Möllendorff's 2000 commentary, then, goes beyond the micro- to the macrotextual level and focuses strongly on metapoetics and allegorical interpretation.

[2] For a brief survey of the various generic classifications of the *VH*, cf. Anderson 1996: 555–556. Generally speaking, I would argue that it is probably least appropriate to reduce this text to one specific genre, and the many and varied existing attempts at categorisation serve to illustrate the intractability of the task. Larmour's 2002 statement in his review of von Möllendorff's 2000 commentary sums up this whole issue quite neatly (cf. ibid. n. 1 for further references): "The *True Histories* [...] has long drawn attention for its humorous and imaginative content and is one of the archetypal texts of the fantastic journey tradition. Its place within other genres has been a matter of considerable discussion. In addition to parody, pastiche, and satire, it has been variously categorised as romance, allegory, and science fiction, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that it partakes of all these genres." Concerning the parody question, it is generally acknowledged that Lucian's statement οὐκ ἀκωμῳδήτως ᾔνικται in his proem (*VH* 1.2; cf. below) points to a parodistic intention of the text (cf. e.g. Georgiadou and Larmour 1994: 23: "conveys the sense of the concept we term 'parody'"; likewise, Kim 2010, in his chapter on Lucian, repeatedly treats the *VH* as a parody, cf. e.g. 141–142, 169, and *passim*). However, von Möllendorff 2000: 48–52 has famously (and, in my view, convincingly) argued against a simplistic reading of the phrase in this direction and a confinement of the whole *VH* to a parody.

not my intention to explore the issue of categorisation and parodisation in this chapter.[3] Rather, my focus will be on the question of the meaning and significance and—in particular—the narratological and metapoetic bearing of the letter that Odysseus writes to Calypso in the second book of the *VH* (2.35–36). As is well-known, so-called "embedded letters" are a narrative means that is often to be found in Greek prose texts, but especially in the novels and in related novelistic texts (viz. prose texts that are sometimes called "fringe novels") such as Lucian's *VH*.[4] Beyond my intratextual analysis of the letter's narrative function within Lucian's text, I will also give insights concerning the Second Sophistic and, in particular, make reference to the position and perception of Homer and the Homeric epics within this intellectual movement. It will be argued that Lucian stages himself as the author of a "second/new *Odyssey* in prose" and thus himself as a "new Homer." To achieve this end, Odysseus' letter to Calypso acts as an authentication device, as it suggests that Homeric figures can speak not only in Homeric hexameters, but also in Atticising prose; it therefore also justifies Lucian's creation of an epic tale in Attic prose.[5]

I.

Lucian's *Verae Historiae* takes an exceptional position as far as its metapoetics and its intertextuality are concerned because in his proem, Lucian[6]

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[3] Likewise, I do not wish to explore the role of letters in Lucian's œuvre in general. On this aspect, cf. the contribution by Slater (this volume) on the function of epistolary form within Lucian's *Saturnalia*.

[4] Cf. e.g. Rosenmeyer 2001: 133–168, Rosenmeyer 2006: 29–34 ("the letter seems comfortably at home in the novel," 34), and the Introduction to this volume, pp. 9–15, 30–32. On the categorisation of Lucian's *VH* as a "fringe novel," cf. Holzberg 2006: 25.

[5] The significance and role of Odysseus' letter to Calypso in the second book has been only insufficiently addressed by Georgiadou and Larmour 1998, Rütten 1997 and von Möllendorff 2000. Surprisingly, the topic has generally received little scholarly attention; in more recent scholarship on epistolary literature, cf. the brief treatments by Rosenmeyer 2001: 133–134, Jenkins 2006: 2–5 and Kim 2010: 171–172.

[6] The first-person narrator of the *VH* is called Λουκιανός by Homer on the epigram which he composes for him (*VH* 2.28; on this passage cf. below). We as readers are therefore strongly invited to equate the first-person narrator of the text with its author (cf. Goldhill 2002: 65, Kim 2010: 172–173). This implied equation notwithstanding, we have to remember that it is not the real author, but the construct of an implied author with whom we are dealing. It is only for the sake of convenience that I use the name "Lucian" both for the real and the implied author; in most cases, it will become clear from the context which concept is behind. (On the theoretical concept of the "implied author," cf. Booth 1961 and, more recently, Heinen 2002.)

makes the intertextual and fictitious character of his text overtly explicit. Regarding intertextuality, he promises the following (*VH* 1.2):

> τῶν ἱστορουμένων ἕκαστον οὐκ ἀκωμῳδήτως ᾔνικται πρός τινας τῶν παλαιῶν ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων.
>
> Everything in my story is a more or less comical parody[7] of one or another of the poets, historians and philosophers of old.[8]

Thus the reader—and in particular, the Second Sophistic πεπαιδευμένος, that is, a second-century middle- or upper-class reader with a strong educational background and refined literary and historical knowledge[9]—is challenged to look out for intertextuality throughout the text and join in the typically sophistic game of eagerly searching for allusions and references.[10] Regarding the fictitious nature of the story, then, Lucian admits to being a liar in a strangely provocative way (*VH* 1.4):

> κἂν ἓν γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι. οὕτω δ' ἄν μοι δοκῶ καὶ τὴν παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων κατηγορίαν ἐκφυγεῖν αὐτὸς ὁμολογῶν μηδὲν ἀληθὲς λέγειν. γράφω τοίνυν περὶ ὧν μήτε εἶδον μήτε ἔπαθον μήτε παρ' ἄλλων ἐπυθόμην, ἔτι δὲ μήτε ὅλως ὄντων μήτε τὴν ἀρχὴν γενέσθαι δυναμένων. διὸ δεῖ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας μηδαμῶς πιστεύειν αὐτοῖς.
>
> For I shall at least be truthful in saying one thing, namely that I am a liar. I think I can escape the censure of the world by my own admission that I am not telling a word of truth. Be it understood, then, that I am writing about things which I have neither seen nor had to do with nor learnt from others—which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in the nature of things, cannot exist. Therefore my readers should on no account believe in them.

Given this statement, not only is the title 'Αληθῆ Διηγήματα ironically taken *ad absurdum*, but we as the readers are confronted with an inextricably paradoxical situation: since we learn that the only true thing we are told is that the narrator is going to lie, then we do not know whether this statement itself is true or not, given that the narrator openly admits to being a liar.

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7 On the vexed question as to the meaning of the phrase οὐκ ἀκωμῳδήτως ᾔνικται, cf. Dane 1988: 67–82, Georgiadou and Larmour 1998: 23 and 53–54, von Möllendorff 2000: 48–52; cf. also my n.2.

8 The Greek text of Lucian's *VH* used in this article is that of Bompaire 1998; the English translation is that of Harmon 1913, with occasional modifications.

9 On the concept of the Second Sophistic πεπαιδευμένος, cf. e.g. Schmitz 1997: 63–66 and *passim*, Korenjak 2000: 53–55, 61–65 and *passim*, von Möllendorff 2000: 3–7 and 10–12, Whitmarsh 2005b: 13–15, Zweimüller 2008: 89–107.

10 Cf. also e.g. Bompaire 1998: 44: "Lucien s'adresse à un public de connaisseurs lettrés, amateurs de lectures et capables de participer au jeu des citations et allusions […]."

In short, therefore, Lucian's paradoxical poetological programme ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι is by no means a liar's confession or anything of the kind, but rather an invitation to the reader to constantly reflect upon the question of what is—or can be—true or false.[11]

Further, Lucian proclaims to put himself in line with a long-established tradition of wondrous storytelling and refers to the Homeric Odysseus as the ἀρχηγός ("initiator") and διδάσκαλος ("teacher") of all storytellers and liars (*VH* 1.3):

> πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι τὰ αὐτὰ τούτοις προελόμενοι συνέγραψαν ὡς δή τινας ἑαυτῶν πλάνας τε καὶ ἀποδημίας, θηρίων τε μεγέθη ἱστοροῦντες καὶ ἀνθρώπων ὠμότητας καὶ βίων καινότητας· ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὁμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς, τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλκίνουν διηγούμενος ἀνέμων τε δουλείαν καὶ μονοφθάλμους καὶ ὠμοφάγους καὶ ἀγρίους τινὰς ἀνθρώπους, ἔτι δὲ πολυκέφαλα ζῷα καὶ τὰς ὑπὸ φαρμάκων τῶν ἑταίρων μεταβολάς.

> Many others, with the same intent, have written about imaginary travels and journeys of theirs, telling of huge beasts, cruel men and strange ways of living. Their initiator and teacher in this sort of buffoonery is Homer's Odysseus, who tells Alcinous and his court about winds in bondage, one-eyed men, cannibals and savages; also about animals with many heads, and transformations of his comrades under the influence of drugs.

Consequently, from the very beginning, the reader is encouraged to equate the Lucianic first-person narrator with the Homeric Odysseus, who is the archetypal storyteller, trickster and liar.[12] Therefore, it seems logical to read the *Verae Historiae* as an Odyssean tale, as a "second/new *Odyssey* in prose." Hence, we can expect a quasi-Odyssean story which is going to resemble the original *Odyssey* in some way, and which will compete, metapoetically speaking, with its Homeric predecessor. The similarity of the two texts is obvious even when compared only superficially: in both cases, the first-person narrator is the captain of a ship's crew on a journey on the ocean; he is the teller of a series of fantastic stories in which he claims to have been involved personally, together with his crew; to some degree, the *Verae*

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[11] Cf. Ní Mheallaigh 2005: 155 on Lucian's poetological programme: "By speaking metatextually *as the author* in the proem about the text we are about to read, and addressing his remarks to the extradiegetic reader of this text, Lucian establishes the *VH* as a self-conscious narrative, which invites more than one reading, and draws attention constantly to its own status as a literary text."

[12] On *VH* 1.3 see also Georgiadou and Larmour 1994: 1482–1487 and Saraceno 1998. On Odysseus as a liar, see e.g. Walcot 1977; on Odysseus as a trickster-figure, see Bär 2010: 303–304 with n. 57 for further references.

Historiae follows chronologically the adventures of Odysseus as they are told in the *Apologoi*, the embedded narrative in books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*; finally, the first-person narrator presents himself as a (partial) liar or at least hints at his unreliability as far as "the truth" is concerned.[13]

In addition to this, however, we may not only expect some kind of "second/new *Odyssey* in prose," as Odysseus is mentioned explicitly in the proem, but anticipate that Odysseus himself may appear as a character in the *Verae Historiae*. As we know, this is indeed the case—he appears as a character three times. When Lucian and his crew come to the Island of the Blessed, they meet him, amongst various other historical and mythical figures of the past. On this first occasion, they see him, lying at the banquet together with Homer (*VH* 2.15):

> ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ δείπνῳ μουσικῇ τε καὶ ᾠδαῖς σχολάζουσιν· ᾄδεται δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη μάλιστα· καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ πάρεστι καὶ συνευωχεῖται αὐτοῖς ὑπὲρ τὸν Ὀδυσσέα κατακείμενος.
>
> At the board they pass their time with poetry and song. For the most part they sing the epics of Homer, who is there himself and shares the revelry, lying at table in the place above Odysseus.

Subsequent to this, after Lucian has got in touch with Homer himself and has managed to ask him numerous questions, we hear Homer say that he had recently won a lawsuit against Thersites with Odysseus' help as his lawyer (*VH* 2.20):

> προσιὼν γὰρ ἄν τι ἐπυνθανόμην αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὃς προθύμως πάντα ἀπεκρίνετο, καὶ μάλιστα μετὰ τὴν δίκην, ἐπειδὴ ἐκράτησεν· ἦν γάρ τις γραφὴ κατ' αὐτοῦ ἀπενηνεγμένη ὕβρεως ὑπὸ Θερσίτου ἐφ' οἷς αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ποιήσει ἔσκωψεν, καὶ ἐνίκησεν ὁ Ὅμηρος Ὀδυσσέως συναγορεύοντος.
>
> I would go and make enquiries of him and he would willingly give me an answer to everything, particularly after the lawsuit that he had won: for, a charge of libel had been brought against him by Thersites because of the way he had ridiculed him in his poetry, and the case was won by Homer, with the aid of Odysseus as his lawyer.

13 All these and many other affinities between the *Verae Historiae* and the *Odyssey* have long been pointed out in scholarship and therefore need no further comment. I mention but Georgiadou and Larmour who, in the Introduction to their commentary (1998: 1–48), place strong emphasis on the Odyssean nature of the *VH*, and the article by van Mal-Maeder 1992, who stresses the process of "prosification" and "depoetisation" which the *VH* demonstrates. Cf. also the short survey given by Kim 2010: 142–143, and Whitmarsh 2011: 185–186: "Lucian's figure of the endlessly inquisitive protagonist looks back to Homer's Odysseus."

Finally, when Lucian and his crew are about to set sail and depart from the Island of the Blessed, Odysseus approaches him and commits his letter to Calypso to him (*VH* 2.28–29):

> τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ ἐλθὼν πρὸς Ὅμηρον τὸν ποιητὴν ἐδεήθην αὐτοῦ ποιῆσαί μοι δίστιχον ἐπίγραμμα· καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐποίησεν, στήλην βηρύλλου λίθου ἀναστήσας ἐπέγραψα πρὸς τῷ λιμένι. τὸ δὲ ἐπίγραμμα ἦν τοιόνδε·
>
> > Λουκιανὸς τάδε πάντα φίλος μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν
> > εἶδέ τε καὶ πάλιν ἦλθε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.
>
> μείνας δὲ κἀκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν, τῇ ἐπιούσῃ ἀνηγόμην τῶν ἡρώων παραπεμπόντων. ἔνθα μοι καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς προσελθὼν λάθρᾳ τῆς Πηνελόπης δίδωσιν ἐπιστολὴν εἰς Ὠγυγίαν τὴν νῆσον Καλυψοῖ κομίζειν.
>
> On the next day I went to the poet Homer and asked him to compose me a two-line epigram, and when he had done so, I set up a slab of beryl near the harbour and had the epigram carved on it. The epigram read as follows:
>
> > One Lucian, whom the blessed gods befriend,
> > Beheld what's here, and home again did wend.
>
> I stayed that day, too, and put to sea on the next, escorted by the heroes. At that juncture Odysseus came to me—without the knowledge of Penelope—and gave me a letter to carry to Ogygia Island, to Calypso.

Interestingly, all three encounters with Odysseus are but snapshots. First, the members of the ship's crew see him from afar; second, they hear about him. Only the third and last time, Lucian and Odysseus meet in person—but the meeting remains surprisingly unspectacular and is reported in only one sentence.[14] However, on learning the name of the intended recipient of the letter, the reader pricks up his ears: it is Calypso, the immortal nymph whom Odysseus had left for good in order to return home to his wife Penelope—but not without being urged to do so by Hermes, and of course not without having had a good time with her for a while. Therefore, we may wonder: why is Odysseus writing to Calypso? What is he trying to hide from Penelope? And, what does the letter say—are we going to find out about its content? A private letter is a matter of strict confidence, and consequently, we as the readers are not supposed to read it.[15] All in all, the handing over of Odysseus' letter to Lucian and the fact that nothing else is revealed about it, makes us curious about its content. In addition, it causes us to wonder

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14 In narratological terms, this is a case of compression.

15 Cf. Hodkinson and Rosenmeyer (this volume, p. 3) on the "*frisson* of external readers 'eavesdropping' on a private conversation" as "the crucial ingredient of most epistolary literature;" see further in this volume Gordon (p. 142), Slater (p. 207), and Repath (p. 237).

whether we will ever find out, and if so, in what manner. In other words: the reader is invited to consider different (potential) ways of how the story might continue, that is, to think about the different alternatives for the narrative development. In this manner, before having learnt about the content of the letter, the letter itself is being marked as a pivotal point in the narrative development, and its significance as a narratological device is thus emphasised.

It is only after a detour to the Isle of the Wicked and the Isle of the Dreams that Lucian and his crew finally arrive at the island of Ogygia, where we hope at last to find out about the letter's content. However, unexpectedly, it is not Calypso, but Lucian (who had been assigned the mute role of a γραμματοφόρος) who reads the letter out loud before handing it over to Calypso, thus sharing the information with his readers (*VH* 2.35–36). Odysseus' letter thus becomes an "intercepted letter," whereas we as readers turn into "accidental readers":[16]

> τριταῖοι δ' ἐκεῖθεν τῇ ᾿Ωγυγίᾳ νήσῳ προσσχόντες ἀπεβαίνομεν. πρότερον δ' ἐγὼ λύσας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀνεγίνωσκον τὰ γεγραμμένα. ἦν δὲ τοιάδε· "᾿Οδυσσεὺς Καλυψοῖ χαίρειν. ἴσθι με, ὡς τὰ πρῶτα ἐξέπλευσα παρὰ σοῦ τὴν σχεδίαν κατασκευασάμενος, ναυαγίᾳ χρησάμενον μόλις ὑπὸ Λευκοθέας διασωθῆναι εἰς τὴν τῶν Φαιάκων χώραν, ὑφ' ὧν ἐς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀποπεμφθεὶς κατέλαβον πολλοὺς τῆς γυναικὸς μνηστῆρας ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις τρυφῶντας· ἀποκτείνας δὲ ἅπαντας ὑπὸ Τηλεγόνου ὕστερον τοῦ ἐκ Κίρκης μοι γενομένου ἀνῃρέθην, καὶ νῦν εἰμι ἐν τῇ Μακάρων νήσῳ πάνυ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ τῷ καταλιπεῖν τὴν παρὰ σοὶ δίαιταν καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ σοῦ προτεινομένην ἀθανασίαν. ἢν οὖν καιροῦ λάβωμαι, ἀποδρὰς ἀφίξομαι πρὸς σέ." ταῦτα μὲν ἐδήλου ἡ ἐπιστολή, καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ὅπως ξενισθῶμεν. ἐγὼ δὲ προελθὼν ὀλίγον ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης εὗρον τὸ σπήλαιον τοιοῦτον οἷον ῞Ομηρος εἶπεν, καὶ αὐτὴν ταλασιουργοῦσαν. ὡς δὲ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἔλαβεν καὶ ἐπελέξατο, πρῶτα μὲν ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐδάκρυεν, ἔπειτα δὲ παρεκάλει ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ξένια καὶ εἱστία λαμπρῶς καὶ περὶ τοῦ ᾿Οδυσσέως ἐπυνθάνετο καὶ περὶ τῆς Πηνελόπης, ὁποία τε εἴη τὴν ὄψιν καὶ εἰ σωφρονοίη, καθάπερ ᾿Οδυσσεὺς πάλαι περὶ αὐτῆς ἐκόμπαζεν· καὶ ἡμεῖς τοιαῦτα ἀπεκρινάμεθα, ἐξ ὧν εἰκάζομεν εὐφρανεῖσθαι αὐτήν.

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16 Terminology following Jenkins 2006: 1. Similarly, the term "violated letter" (coined by Felman 1982 in her analysis of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*; cf. Jenkins 2006: 2 n. 3) can also be applied to it. Intercepted or violated letters are a common motif and narrative mover in ancient narrative; cf. Jenkins 2006 *passim*; in this volume, cf. e.g. Rosenmeyer on Eur. *IA* 111–113 (p. 55) and Repath on intercepted letters in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* (p. 260n85), and also Gordon on the representation of letters to courtesans as stolen or intercepted (pp. 148–150). A famous modern example of intercepted and violated letters in literature is to be found in Gottfried Keller's (1819–1890) novella *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe* (from *Die Leute von Seldwyla* 2.4, written between 1860 and 1875, published in 1875), where the interception and violation of (faked) love letters leads to massive relationship problems, divorce and new marriage.

> On the third day out from there we touched at the island of Ogygia and landed. But first I opened the letter and read what was written in it. It was as follows: "Odysseus to Calypso, greeting. You should know that soon after I had built the raft and sailed away from you, I was shipwrecked, and with the help of Leucothea managed to reach the land of the Phaeacians in safety. They sent me home, and there I found numerous suitors of my wife who were living on the fat of the land at our house. I killed them all, but was later slain by Telegonus, my son by Circe. And now I am on the Isle of the Blest, deeply regretting to have given up my life with you and the immortality which you had offered me. Therefore, if I get a chance, I shall run away and come to you." That was what the letter stated, and with regard to us, that we should be welcomed as guests. On going a short way from the sea I found the cave, which was as Homer had described it, and found Calypso herself working wool. When she had taken the letter and read it, she wept a long time at first, and then she asked us in to enjoy her hospitality, gave us a splendid feast and enquired about Odysseus and Penelope—what she looked like and whether she was prudent, as Odysseus used to boast in old times. We made her such answers as we thought would please her.

How is this passage to be understood? Rütten 1997: 24–29 points out numerous comical aspects which make the reader laugh if the letter and the whole scene are read against the backdrop of its Odyssean counterpart. Most strikingly, whereas in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus does all he can to return home to his beloved wife, now he does the opposite in order to get away from her and back to Calypso.[17] Thus, the most important narrative mover of the *Odyssey* is comically inverted.[18] Further, the way the characters are depicted produces a comical effect when compared to their characterisation in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus seems to have lost his heroic qualities and appears to be thinking of nothing but Calypso. His argument that he was sorry to have given up his life with her and the immortality which she offered to him sounds odd, even ridiculous (and therefore feeble), since being on the Island of the Blessed implies that he is already immortal. Therefore, we are led to suspect a purely sexual motif—and in truth, such is the conclusion; Odysseus' interest in Calypso is purely sexual.[19] On the other hand, Calypso, despite her immor-

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[17] This passage finds an interesting parallel in Alfred Lord Tennyson's (1809–1892) dramatic monologue *Ulysses* (written in 1833, published in 1842), where the aged ex-hero complains about sitting "among these barren crags" (line 2) and being "match'd with an aged wife" (line 3).

[18] This touches upon the vexed question as to whether or not the *VH* is to be understood as a parody (in that case, a parody of the *Odyssey*); cf. my n.2.

[19] Cf. also Rosenmeyer 2001: 133, who emphasises the strength of "the association of letters and erotic treachery" in this context.

tality, seems to have lost much of her attractiveness and appears much more like a spinster,[20] working wool and inquisitively inquiring whether Penelope was really σώφρων, which means "prudent," but also "chaste."[21]

II.

As we have seen, Lucian establishes his paradoxical poetological programme ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι in his proem and thus elevates the negotiation between truthfulness and falsehood to his main concern. By equating himself with the character of the Homeric Odysseus, he inscribes himself into a long-established tradition and marks his text as a "second/new *Odyssey* in prose." As demonstrated, the first-person narrator Lucian and the Homeric Odysseus are approximated to one another in three steps (first Lucian *sees* Odysseus, then he is being *told* something about him, and then they *meet* face to face, but only briefly), before they finally—narratologically speaking—"coincide" with each other, as the homodiegetic narrator of the *Verae Historiae* reads out a letter which was written by the homodiegetic narrator of some of the *Odyssey* (viz. the *Apologoi*: *Odyssey* books 9–12).[22] But in what way is this letter significant? A letter in a narrative has (or may have) the function of adding a degree of plausibility to the narrative; it is—narratologically speaking—a so-called *Beglaubigungsapparat* ("authentication device") or *Beglaubigungsstrategie* ("authentication strategy").[23] However, Lucian's epistolary authentication device is undermined in various respects. First, it contrasts greatly with the poetological programme ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι: in other words, can we really have faith in an authentication device which belongs to a narrative of which the poetological programme is untruth?[24] Second, the fact that the letter has been written

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20 The idea that immortality does not necessarily involve eternal youth—as it is, for example, prominently displayed in the myth of Eos and Tithonus—is recalled here.

21 Cf. LSJ s.v. σώφρων [I.1.] "*of sound mind*," but also II.[1.] "in Att., esp. *having control over the sensual desires, temperate, self-controlled, chaste*." Cf. also Jenkins 2006: 5.

22 I disagree with the idea that the Homeric parallel for Lucian visiting Calypso on her island should be the god Hermes, as assumed by Stengel 1911: 83 (and, most recently, defended by Kim 2010: 171 n. 108).

23 Cf. also Hodkinson and Rosenmeyer (this volume, pp. 15–16), who point to the "inherently truthful nature of letters, whether embedded or self-contained narratives."

24 From a formal point of view, it may also be noted that Odysseus' letter does not contain any type of valediction, which would have been accepted as standard in an antique letter (cf. Koskenniemi 1956: 151–154). This *Leerstelle* also adds to the undermining of the letter's veracity.

by Odysseus, the archetypal trickster and liar, makes us doubt the sincerity of its content.[25] Third, the equation between Lucian and Odysseus, which has so carefully been established and which culminates in this very passage, obliges us to combine the first and the second point—which means: we cannot know whether any of the stories Lucian is telling us are "true"; and even if they are "true," then we can still not be sure whether the content of Odysseus' *letter* is to be imagined as "true," or whether Lucian is inventing it. Therefore, what seems to be an authentication device at first turns out to be—in the specific context of the *Verae Historiae*—a device of double uncertainty, as it were.

Finally, as the letter has been written by a Homeric character, one feels compelled to wonder whether anything letter-like is actually to be found in the Homeric epics. In the *Cypria*, there might have been a reference to writing or letters in connection with Palamedes; however, as the *Cypria* (like the whole rest of the *Epic Cycle*) is almost entirely lost and therefore practically unknown to us, this has to remain in the realm of speculation.[26] Further, attention may be drawn to the Odysseus and Palamedes story as it is known from and since the Euripidean *Palamedes* (*TrGF* frs. 578–590): Odysseus takes revenge on Palamedes for having unmasked his "insanity" as mere pretense and therefore having obliged him to enter the Greek forces by hiding gold and a forged letter in his hut, as a result of which he is thought to be a traitor and stoned to death.[27] Consequently, on the basis of this story, Odysseus as a *scriptor litterarum* is a rather ambivalent, if not

[25] Particularly in view of the fact that the idea of a letter as a representation, even embodiment of its writer is an ancient *topos*; cf. Thraede 1970: 146–161. Cf. also Hodkinson and Rosenmeyer (this volume, p. 15): "the idea that [letters] offer an unmediated glimpse into the soul of their writers." Further, Georgiadou and Larmour point to the last, effectively short sentence of the letter-reading scene (*VH* 2.36; cf. above) that not only adds further plausibility to the whole incident, but also once again stages Lucian as a liar and therefore helps to equate him with Odysseus (1998: 223): "psychological realism, which has the effect of making the narrator, once again, seem reliable and credible. It is also just the kind of thing Odysseus would have done."

[26] I owe this point to Ewen Bowie. See also the following note.

[27] The motif of Odysseus taking revenge on Palamedes is already cyclic; cf. Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* (*EpGF* p. 31.41–43 = *PEG* I p. 40.30–33). However, in the Cyprian version, Odysseus does not retaliate upon Palamedes by trickery, but by violence, viz. by drowning him (*EpGF* fr. 20 = *PEG* I fr. 30). The motif of the forged letter, first recorded in the fragmentarily preserved Euripidean *Palamedes* (*TrGF* frs. 578–590), later becomes canonical (cf. Käppel 2000: 167 for a survey of the relevant passages). Cf. also the contribution by Rosenmeyer (this volume, pp. 60–66), where Palamedes is discussed as an almost tragic hero who is conquered by his own invention; also Gera (p. 92).

entirely negative figure. As a result, the reader may expect a dangerous situation to arise for the narrator, with strongly negative consequences, so much so that when the harmless content of the letter is finally revealed, a comical effect arises from this clash.[28] Finally, I should like to mention the famous metadiegetic passage in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, where Glaucus introduces himself to Diomedes by telling him the story of his grandfather Bellerophontes: king Proetus wishes to eliminate Bellerophontes, but he does not dare to kill him. He sends Bellerophontes to the king of Lycia and tasks him with delivering written tablets, which are referred to in the *Iliad* as σήματα λυγρά ("fatal tokens," *Il.* 6.168). When the king of Lycia deciphers the σήματα, he has Bellerophontes carry out three seemingly infeasible duties, which are, however, mastered by Bellerophontes (*Il.* 6.167–180):

> κτεῖναι μέν ῥ' ἀλέεινε, σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ,
> πέμπε δέ μιν Λυκίηνδε, πόρεν δ' ὅ γε σήματα λυγρά
> γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ θυμοφθόρα πολλά·
> δεῖξαι δ' ἠνώγει ᾧ πενθερῷ ὄφρ' ἀπόλοιτο.
> αὐτὰρ ὃ βῆ Λυκίηνδε θεῶν ὑπ' ἀμύμονι πομπῇ.
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ Λυκίην ἷξε Ξάνθον τε ῥέοντα,
> προφρονέως μιν τῖεν ἄναξ Λυκίης εὐρείης.
> ἐννῆμαρ ξείνισσε καὶ ἐννέα βοῦς ἱέρευσεν.
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ δεκάτη ἐφάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς,
> καὶ τότε μιν ἐρέεινε καὶ ᾔτεε σῆμα ἰδέσθαι,
> ὅττι ῥά οἱ γαμβροῖο παρὰ Προίτοιο φέροιτο.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ σῆμα κακὸν παρεδέξατο γαμβροῦ,
> πρῶτον μέν ῥα Χίμαιραν ἀμαιμακέτην ἐκέλευσε
> πεφνέμεν. [...]

> He shunned killing Bellerophontes, for his heart shrank from that; but instead Proetus sent him to Lycia, and gave him fatal tokens, scratching in a folded tablet many deadly signs, and ordered him to show them to his father-in-law, so that he might perish. So he went to Lycia under the incomparable escort of the gods. And when he came to Lycia and the Xanthus River, then the king of broad Lycia eagerly did him honor: for nine days he showed him hospitality, and sacrificed nine oxen. But when the tenth rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, then at last he questioned him and asked to see the token he brought from his son-in-law, Proetus. But when he had received the evil token given by his son-in-law, first he ordered Bellerophontes to slay the raging Chimaera. [...][29]

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[28] I owe this point to Patricia Rosenmeyer. Cf. also her discussion of Odysseus' letter in the *VH* in her contribution to this volume (pp. 66–68). Again, the generic question relating to the *VH* as a parody of the *Odyssey* arises (cf. my n. 2).

[29] The Greek text of the *Iliad* is that of van Thiel 1996; the English translation is adapted from that of Murray and Wyatt 1999.

This famous passage is the *locus primus* of the trope of the so-called “fatal letter,” with its message sealed within folded tablets, saying “kill the bearer of this”.[30] Although the context of Odysseus’ letter to Calypso is different from the Bellerophontes story in the *Iliad*, I would argue that the association of the letter-motif with epic/Homeric poetry will spontaneously remind a recipient of this Iliadic passage. Again, then, a comical effect arises from the clash between the expected dangerous situation for the narrator in the role of the γραμματοφόρος, and the actual content of the letter.[31] In more general terms, however, as both the Iliadic σήματα λυγρά and the post-Iliadic Odysseus and Palamedes story are so closely associated with the motifs of deception, manipulation, and falsehood, and at the same time consitute two famous *loci classici*, I would read either of these as an intertext for our passage, so much so that a specific epic flavour of “truthfulness vs. falsehood” is further added to it. Thus, in the end, the reader is encouraged to construct an associative link between epic poetry, the Homeric tradition and the poetological programme of Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*. Lucian’s poetological programme can—if not must—thus be perceived through Homeric lenses.

III.

As the letter-passage unmistakably encourages its readers to be read through a Homeric lens, let us take a closer look at the character of Odysseus in its Homeric context. It is a well-known fact that ever since the *Odyssey* itself, Odysseus has constantly been read and seen as Homer’s mouthpiece, as Homer’s *alter ego*, as a *mise-en-abyme* of the Homeric narrator.[32] This

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30 Cf. Stoevesandt 2008: 67–68 on this passage and on the trope of the fatal letter in general (with further references); also Rosenmeyer 2001: 39–44 and Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 124–125.

31 Cf. also Rosenmeyer (this volume, p. 66), who labels both Odysseus’ letter in the *VH* and Bellerophontes’ tablets in *Iliad* 6 as “disobedient letters,” viz. letters that suggest one thing, but—once unsealed and read—offer another. The arising discrepancy between their “external appearance” and their “internal meaning” is, according to Rosenmeyer, a constitutive feature of these two cases. Cf. also Kasprzyk (this volume, p. 283) who argues that owing to the fatal letter in *Iliad* 6, manipulation and trickery can be seen as the essence of letters in Greek literature; further, also Speyer 1971: 126 and Rosenmeyer 2001: 42–43.

32 Cf. e.g. Pratt 1993: 63: “Readers of the *Odyssey* have frequently remarked a strong affinity between the storytelling Odysseus and the Homeric bard. Not only does the character take over the poet’s role as the narrator for a significant portion of the *Odyssey*’s narrative, but his

traditional equation is alluded to in the *Verae Historiae* when Homer and Odysseus lie together at the banquet (cf. *VH* 2.15 quoted above), but even more so, when Odysseus defends Homer in a lawsuit against Thersites (cf. *VH* 2.20 quoted above). On the other hand, we have seen that Lucian and Odysseus are approximated to one another in three steps before they finally (almost) merge into one figure in the letter-passage (cf. above). With regard to what has been said so far about the immanent poetological meaning of the whole passage, another poetological interpretation may be suggested: the traditional association between Homer, the *poeta*, and Odysseus, the *dramatis persona*, is now released and replaced by a new association between Odysseus and Lucian. Although Lucian also gets in touch with Homer on the Island of the Blessed,[33] in the end Lucian and Odysseus enter into a much closer relationship. Most telling, however, is the fact that in his epigram which he composes for Lucian,[34] Homer adheres to the traditional stichic hexameter whereas Odysseus—a Homeric character and, in the *Apologoi*, even a Homeric bard—does not write his letter in verse, but in Attic prose. In other words: Homer's *alter ego* has renounced his Homeric speech and has instead adopted an Attic prose style, that is, the stylistic ideal of the Second Sophistic. This break with the Homeric tradition is also mirrored by the content of Odysseus' letter, as the key narrative mover of the *Odyssey*—Odysseus' longing for his homeland and his beloved wife Penelope—is comically inverted, as he now wishes to reunite with Calypso instead.[35] Consequently, after defying Homer by announcing a "second/new *Odyssey* in prose" in his proem to the *Verae Historiae* (see above), Lucian

travels among unfamiliar peoples whom he repeatedly entertains with stories in return for hospitality mimic the wanderings of the professional minstrel. […] The poet of the *Odyssey* seems anxious to draw the connection, for Odysseus is compared to a bard three times in the poem. No other character in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* is explicitly compared to a bard even once." Cf. further Goldhill 1991: 56–68 (with 57, n. 98 for references), Pratt 1993: 55–94 (with 2, n. 1 for references) and Rabel 1999.

33 Amongst other things, Lucian wishes to know where Homer originates from, to which he answers, most surprisingly, that he was originally a Babylonian (*VH* 20). Further, he asks him whether all the athetised hexameters had in truth been written by him or not, to which he answers, again surprisingly, that they were all his own, without exception (ibid.). On Lucian interviewing Homer, cf. Nesselrath 2002 and Kim 2010: 162–168.

34 On Homer's epigram, cf. also Ní Mheallaigh 2008: 420 and Kim 2010: 172–173. The former assumes that Lucian's "implied readers […] were complicit in ironic textual games, including the invention of pseudo-archaeological sources and traditions as authenticating strategies for fiction which played with authority with varying degrees of irony and which thematised the complex interpretational game of fiction reading itself" (422).

35 Cf. Ollier 1962: 80 and Rütten 1997: 24–29 on the comical effects of the passage.

has now managed to get Odysseus—none other than Homer's intimate *alter ego*—on his side. The ἀγών, as it seems, has been decided in favour of Lucian.[36]

What do we gain from these considerations, in terms of understanding the text as a whole and, more specifically, in what way is the letter involved in this? How can we better understand Lucian's potential motivation to write such a text which establishes itself as a "second/new *Odyssey* in prose"? To this end, we should take a brief look at the question of what Homer and the Homeric epics mean to the Second Sophistic.[37] Generally speaking, it has to be said that Second Sophistic authors are in an uneasy position as regards Homer and his epics, in terms of both form and content. For on the one hand, Homer is the poet-father of all Greeks, and the Homeric epics are the two most important classical reference texts. On the other hand, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are not—to put it very simply—Attic prose from the fifth or fourth century BC, but archaic hexameter poetry in an artificial mixture of dialects. Therefore, they do not belong to the genre which is considered the model worth imitating by Second Sophistic authors and consequently, their positioning as classics somehow (at least implicitly) is questionable.[38] These conflicting (and, in fact, irreconcilable) attitudes are also reflected on the level of content: in various texts of the Second Sophistic, Homer is, on the

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[36] It might, of course, be counter-argued that the Homeric characters had "learnt" to speak new idioms different from the Homeric language long before (one may, for example, think of the Attic tragedy, or the poems by Pindar, Stesichorus, etc.) and that therefore a second-century reader would not necessarily have read the *VH*'s Odysseus as a Homeric character decidedly shifting his speech from a Homeric to a non-Homeric idiom. One has, however, to keep in mind that the *VH* is a text that is of considerably more Odyssean nature than probably any other ancient text and that is essentially characterised by a process of prosification and depoetisation of its poetic model (cf. above with n.13). Therefore, it seems compelling to me to conclude that a reader who is stimulated to equate the present text with its Odyssean model and to read the former as a prosaic reworking of the latter will be prone to confer this equation to the character of Odysseus himself and his way of speaking.

[37] On Homer in the Second Sophistic (a topic which has received comparatively little scholarly attention, given Homer's immense significance for Greek culture of the Imperial period), cf. e.g. Bouquiaux-Simon 1968, Kindstrand 1973, Zeitlin 2001, Grossardt 2006: 55–120, Kim 2010 (esp. 1–21 for a general sketch). The following considerations largely draw on my survey of Homer in the Second Sophistic in Bär 2010: 289–291.

[38] The Second Sophistic as such was a genuinely prose phenomenon (most recently cf. e.g. Whitmarsh 2001: 27 and Whitmarsh 2006), and therefore the question as to how far poetry played a role within this system is a somewhat moot point (cf. Bär 2010: 290 n. 13 for further references). On Second Sophistic authors who produced poetry, cf. Bowie 1989, 1990a, 1990b. Cf. also Shorrock 2011: 135 n. 3: "It must be remembered that a lack of poetic material does not necessarily imply that there was a lack of poetic production. Much poetry may simply have failed to survive."

one hand, regarded as an authoritative force and treated with great respect, but on the other, there is a strong tendency to question and therefore revise Homer.[39] We may, for example, think of Dio Chrysostom's eleventh oration, where Dio boldly asserts that Troy was not captured by the Greeks, and Achilles did not kill Hector, but things happended the other way round. Dio does, however, rehabilitate Homer in some way by claiming that he was lying only in the interest of the panhellenic idea and should therefore be excused. Similarly, in Philostratus' dialogue *Heroicus*, Homer and his poetic abilities are highly praised, but on the other hand, Homer is again accused of being a liar: he is said to have received his information about the events and details of the Trojan War from the dead Odysseus who returned from the dead and related everything truthfully to him, but only on the condition that Homer would bend the truth in such a way that Odysseus would be depicted in a better light in his epics (cf. Philostr. *Her*. 43.12–14). Again, we can see the same ambivalent attitude: Homer is accused of distorting the truth, but at the same time, he is being excused for doing so. At the same time, the notion of Odysseus as Homer's *alter ego*, as Homer's mouthpiece, is assumed and developed further.

In the light of this, I would like to suggest the following hypothesis: amongst various other things, Second Sophistic authors are constantly negotiating Homeric issues, either in terms of form, or in terms of content. The inherently contradictory attitudes towards Homer may be one reason for this. One way of negotiating Homer may be seen in texts such as Philostratus' *Heroicus* or Dio's eleventh oration; another way is perhaps to be seen in Lucian's *Verae Historiae*: in inscribing himself into a long-established, traditional equation of a poet and one of his main characters, and in writing a "second/new *Odyssey* in Attic(ising) prose," Lucian seems to give a possible answer to the question of how the Second Sophistic can come to terms with the "Homeric problem" mentioned. Seen from this angle, Lucian's "*Odyssey*" would be more than just an intertextual pleasure, a satire, or a parody;[40] it could also be read as a piece of literary "evidence" that a Homeric epic can equally be written in Atticising classical prose, thus putting second-century prose on an equal footing with Homer, the unequaled forefather not only of Greek literature, but of Greek culture and collective memory in general. In this context, Odysseus' letter becomes important again: not only are Lucian

39 On the typically Second Sophistic practice of Homeric revisionism, cf. Zeitlin 2001, Kim 2010, Whitmarsh 2011: 85–89.

40 Cf. my n.2 on the varying generic classifications of the *VH*.

and Odysseus moving closer together in this very passage; not only is the whole passage a (highly amusing) inversion of a famous Odyssean scene; but the letter also "gives proof" of the fact that Odysseus, a Homeric character, can speak not only in Homeric hexameters, but also, if necessary, in Attic prose. Whereas Homer remains on the Island of the Blessed, has no intentions to go anywhere else, composing his little epigrams, Odysseus has had enough of the *status quo* and has chosen Lucian—his "new Homer"—to realise his plans. The increasing approximation of Odysseus and Lucian can thus, on a metapoetic level, be read as a shift from the old Homer to a new "quasi-Homer." It is Lucian's active role, that is to say, the fact that he recasts the passive role of a γραμματοφόρος which was assigned to him by Odysseus, which makes this shift possible. When seen from this angle, Odysseus' letter becomes a *Beglaubigungsapparat* again: we can watch Lucian "proving" his ability to write an "*Odyssey*" in Attic prose and, at the same time, "proving" Odysseus' ability to cope with this new style. The letter is thus being reloaded with another metapoetic meaning which not only reconfirms Lucian's poetological programme which has been displayed in the proem, but also gives birth to a new literary genre, an "epic in prose."[41]

[41] It may perhaps look somewhat contradictory at first sight to read the *VH* in a parodistic and/or satirical way on the one hand and to take it at face value when it comes to metapoetics on the other. However, apart from the fact that the status of the *VH* as a parody/satire is anything but definite (cf. my n.2), this "contradiction" becomes virtually futile when we make ourselves aware of the potentially endless complexity a literary text can display. Also, we must not forget that "meaning" is never a category inherent to a text, but, rather, that "meaning" is the product of our construction. Hence, it does not seem problematic to me to read the same text in a parodistic manner on the one hand and to take it seriously from a poetological point of view on the other.

YOURS TRULY? LETTERS IN ACHILLES TATIUS

Ian Repath

I. "Love"-Letters in the Greek Novel: Sealed with a Loving Kiss?

The extant Greek novels are each about a pair of lovers, and one of the generic features is that the lovers spend some or most of their time separated from one another.[1] Yet, while there is no shortage of letters of various kinds in these texts, there are very few love letters, however defined,[2] and hardly any letters between the central couple. This is perhaps not as surprising as it may seem, given that the *Liebespaar*, when they are apart, tend to be held captive by pirates or the like, do not know where the other is, or think the other is dead. In addition, the authors of these novels do not need letters to enable a reader to "eavesdrop" on their protagonists' private conversations or convey their personal feelings, since the stories themselves are about private concerns and emotions: there is no shortage of dialogues, laments, soliloquies, prayers, and so on to let us know what the characters are thinking, and, in any case, as authors of fiction, the novelists can enter the minds of their creations. Given these considerations, one might regard any letters between the hero and heroine as potentially being particularly significant.

The only instances of one of the central couple writing to the other occur in Chariton and Achilles Tatius. I shall concentrate on the latter, but the

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[1] This is hardly the case in Longus, who is the exception in this and in many other respects, including the absence of letters: see Bowie 2009: 122–125, for the lack of textuality in his novel. Longus aside, the separation of protagonists is central both to the Greek novel and to the epistolary genre; on this motif in the epistolary genre, see the Introduction to this volume (pp. 11–12), and further Slater (p. 212), Kasprzyk (p. 267), Hodkinson (p. 332), McLarty (p. 377); on the affinity between novel and letter see also Bär (p. 222 n. 4).

[2] Cf. the statements of Rosenmeyer 2001: 154 and 167. The best instance of an amorous letter is that written by Manto to Habrocomes (Xen. Eph. 2.5.1–2). See also Ach. Tat. 5.24, discussed below in section III. Cf. Thisbe's "letter" to Cnemon at Heliod. 2.10; also, Odysseus' letter to Calypso at Lucian *VH* 2.35, with Rosenmeyer 2001: 133–134, and Bär and Rosenmeyer in this volume (pp. 66–68 and 221–236).

former provides some background against which to read the latter,[3] and suggests some of the factors which might be involved. At 4.4.5–10, at the encouragement of the satrap Mithridates into whose hands he has fallen, Chaereas writes to his formerly presumed-dead wife Callirhoe, who now thinks *he* is dead. He writes what has happened to him, how distraught he is at the news she has married someone else, and asks her to change her mind and remember their love, apologising for his jealous kick to her stomach which caused her apparent death.[4] Callirhoe, however, does not get to read this letter, as it is intercepted by her new husband, Dionysius, and becomes the foundation for a case against Mithridates for plotting adultery, since Dionysius, too, thinks Chaereas is dead and that the letter is therefore a forgery.[5] The trial takes places at the court of the Great King in Babylon, where things escalate via a revolt in Egypt into a full-blown international conflict, in which the protagonists are caught up and become important players, all because of Chaereas' letter. This letter does not tell us, the readers, anything that we do not already know: its principal interest lies in the frisson of seeing what effect it will have on those who do not know all the parts of the narrative. This letter has an enormous impact on the course of the plot of the novel through acting as a narrative of events unknown to some of the characters within the novel. It is ironic, however, that it is the disbelieving of this narrative that results in this impact: had Dionysius thought the letter authentic, things might have turned out very differently.[6] This letter and its place in Chariton's novel, then, suggest that when reading the letters in Achilles Tatius, as, perhaps, with reading any letter embedded in a larger narrative, factors to be considered include: the circumstances of composition; the narrative content of the letter and the relationship of that content to the wider narrative and to the reader's knowledge of the wider narrative; the impact on the plot of the contents of the letter and their reception; more broadly, how the letter fits into and helps to shape the author's narrative strategy; and the extent to which the author utilises questions and problems of authentication, forgery, trustworthiness, and

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[3] See, further, in section IX. Although their exact dates are unknown, it is almost certain that Achilles Tatius is the later author: see Bowie 2002 for a discussion.

[4] Cf. Callirhoe writing a farewell letter to Dionysius at 8.4.5–6. He is no longer her husband by then and does not reply.

[5] For intercepted letters in narrative see further this volume's Introduction (p. 19); see also Rosenmeyer (p. 55), Gordon (p. 138), and Bär (p. 227).

[6] See Rosenmeyer 2001: 138–143, Létoublon 2003: 279–280, Robiano 2007 and Nimis 2009: 79–83, on this letter.

believability. Chariton can be seen to exploit and engage with conventions associated with the use of epistolary form, and I aim to analyse and compare how Achilles Tatius uses letters in his narrative.

II. Narrative and Letters in Achilles Tatius: To Whom It May Concern

My principal focus will be on a pair of letters in book five of *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, one from each of the protagonists, but reading them requires an appreciation, albeit brief, of Achilles Tatius' narrative technique.[7] At the beginning of the novel, an anonymous narrator relates that he arrived at Sidon after a storm and met a young man with a story to tell. This turns out to be Cleitophon, and the rest of the novel consists of his narration of his adventures. This is the only extant Greek romantic novel whose principal narrative is given by an internal narrator—a narrator who took part in the narrative he narrates. Achilles Tatius takes advantage of this to have Cleitophon describe things as they happened and as he perceived them, without the benefit of knowledge he gained subsequently: for much of the first few books, the reader learns things as Cleitophon did at the time, either by what he saw, or by what he was told.[8] This breaks down somewhat in the last couple of books under the weight of the complexity of the plot, but it is used at various points to good effect, most famously and for maximum impact and suspense in the two descriptions of Leucippe being violently killed (3.15 and 5.7). Achilles Tatius uses letters as part of his narrative strategy: with the exception of the one he wrote, Cleitophon tells us about the existence of any letters and their contents only when and as he came to know of them. Given this, letters in *Leucippe and Cleitophon* can be as crucial to the plot and as important as narrative to characters within the novel as in a text such as Chariton's, but they can be important as narrative also for the reader, whose access to information is mediated through the restricted viewpoint of the narrating character. Moreover, within this narrative context, a letter will always arrive (more or less) unannounced; it will take the reader

[7] Cf. Bär in this volume (p. 227) on how the narrative set-up of Lucian *VH* complicates any reading of Odysseus' letter at 2.35.

[8] Hägg 1971 is still fundamental to the analysis of Achilles Tatius' narrative technique: see 124–136 for Cleitophon's restricted viewpoint; see Bartsch 1989: 128–129, for some brief comments, Reardon 1994 for an analysis of what Achilles Tatius gains, and loses, by choosing this mode of narration, and also Morgan 2004.

by surprise in much the same way it surprised Cleitophon first time round; it will be read and understood from the point of view of only the recipient, whether that is Cleitophon directly or indirectly; it can allow access to what has happened to someone else and to what they feel without Cleitophon having direct contact with them; because its author is distant and not available for question and discussion, it can leave a sense of openness, puzzlement, and tantalising frustration; and, finally, letters, as written texts, differ in nature from speeches and oral reports, with which they can share some of the aspects listed above.[9] Leucippe's letter, as we shall see, is where Achilles Tatius makes the most of these possibilities.

Leucippe's letter is not the first in the novel, however, and a brief look at the small number of other letters in Achilles Tatius might contribute to reading Leucippe's in its context. The first letter, from Cleitophon's uncle to his father, is found very early in Cleitophon's narration (1.3.5–6). It is quoted, but is very brief and little more than functional: it is a prelude to the introduction of the female protagonist and her mother, and gives a reason for their coming to Tyre; they arrive immediately. However, there is, perhaps, more to this letter than meets the eye. Rosenmeyer comments that it contains details which would not plausibly have been written by one brother to another, such as Sostratus specifying that Leucippe is his daughter, adding: "The letter provides information already known to its addressee but necessary for the wider reading public".[10] There is the additional possibility that we are to imagine that it is not just Achilles Tatius who is providing this information for his reader, but also Cleitophon who is providing it for his narratee; in which case, Cleitophon would be tailoring the contents of the letter to suit the narrative situation and to contain the information he wishes to convey. Such a process of adaptation could be suggested also by the way in which he introduces the letter: "someone came from him [sc. Sostratus] with a

[9] All of these effects can be achieved in an external omniscient narration too, of course, but in fact we are told about the existence and given the contents of the majority of the letters in Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus at the point of composition rather than on their reception: Chariton 4.4.7–10, 4.5.1 (reported indirectly), 4.6.3–4, 4.6.8, 8.4.2–3, and 8.4.5–6 (Chaereas invents the existence of letters from the pharaoh at 8.2.5); Xenophon 2.5.1–2 and 2.5.4. The exceptions are Chariton 4.5.8, but this is a brief covering note and in any case does not contain anything the reader does not already know, and Xenophon 2.12.1. The way the earlier novelists use letters makes the effects Achilles Tatius achieves even more pronounced, especially since he seems to be engaging intertextually with them: see section IX for Chariton and n. 63 for Xenophon. Cf. the practice of the later, narratologically ambitious Heliodorus, e.g. 10.34.1–4, towards the climax of the novel, with Morgan 1989: 317.

[10] Rosenmeyer 2001: 147–148.

letter from Byzantium; and what was written was as follows/of the following kind" (ἦν τὰ γεγραμμένα τοιάδε).[11] The potential ambiguity of the Greek is hard to reproduce, but does reinforce the possibility that the words of the letter which Cleitophon narrates are not exactly those that the letter "actually" contained. Rosenmeyer suggests also that, by being quoted, this letter is given a "separate identity, a staying power beyond the confines of the rest of Clitophon's narrative."[12] This is an idea I shall return to in relation to the letters in book five,[13] but it should already be apparent that there is a potential tension between a letter's "documentary value"[14] and the kind of narratorial interference suggested above.

The second letter occurs in book four, and is mentioned rather than given or quoted (4.11.1). The text of the letter is not given, because Cleitophon will not have seen it, and, in any case, this letter, like the first, has a fairly simple motivating function. The third letter, too, is not quoted, but its potential, and unrealised, significance for the plot is enormous, as Cleinias makes clear:

> It happened that your father had not yet returned from Palestine, and did not return until two days later. There he received a letter (γράμματα) from Leucippe's father which, as it happened, arrived a single day after our departure: in it, Sostratus pledged his daughter to you. On reading this letter (τὰ γράμματα) and hearing of our flight, he found himself in all sorts of troubles, partly because he had foregone the prize promised by this letter (τῆς ἐπιστολῆς), partly because Fortune had arranged events like this in so short a space of time (after all, none of this would have happened, had the letter (τὰ γράμματα) arrived earlier). (5.10.3–4)

As is made explicit, the elopement and subsequent adventures of the central couple would not have happened had circumstances been only slightly different, and the piquancy of this situation is enhanced by the fact that Leucippe is currently dead, having apparently been decapitated three chapters earlier.[15] Achilles Tatius gives us a glimpse here of how important a letter could be in shaping the course of his plot, and it is only a few chapters before the reader encounters a letter which has precisely such an effect.

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11 Translations of *Leucippe and Cleitophon* are taken, with some adaptations, from Whitmarsh and Morales 2001; Greek is cited from Garnaud 1991, with any emendations noted. All references are to *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, unless specified otherwise.

12 Rosenmeyer 2001: 148.

13 See section VIII.

14 Rosenmeyer 2001: 148.

15 See Rosenmeyer 2001: 148–149.

III. Leucippe's Letter: In Her Own Fair Hand

The pair of letters on which I am going to focus occurs at a crucial juncture in the plot. After several months of mourning in Alexandria, Cleitophon has agreed to marry a beautiful, rich widow from Ephesus called Melite. He has refused to have sex with her until they reach her hometown, where he will no longer be reminded of Leucippe. On their first day there they come across a recently bought shaven-headed female slave called Lacaena, who, we are told, has something of Leucippe about her.[16] That evening, the evening when Cleitophon will consummate his marriage to Melite, his slave Satyrus delivers a letter in the middle of dinner:[17]

> When I was outside, he handed me a letter (ἐπιστολήν) without a word. I took it, but before I read it I was immediately struck with amazement, recognising Leucippe's handwriting (λαβὼν δέ, πρὶν ἀναγνῶναί με, κατεπλάγην εὐθύς· ἐγνώρισα γὰρ Λευκίππης τὰ γράμματα)! (5.18.1–2)

The existence of the letter alone, quite apart from what it might say, is narrative dynamite through what it signifies: Leucippe is confirmed to be alive,[18] and, in line with Achilles Tatius' general narrative technique, the reader learns this stunning fact at exactly the same time as Cleitophon learned it. In addition, Cleitophon has not (yet) been unfaithful to Leucippe, and the expected outcome of the novel—the happy reunion and marriage of the central couple—is now a possibility again.

Before looking at the contents of the letter itself, Cleitophon's recognition of Leucippe's handwriting poses a question, since we do not know that

[16] Reardon 1994: 94 n. 11, comments that: "the effect of surprise is spoiled by Clitophon's comment that she reminded him of Leucippe. Here Achilles is doing his best to get out of a patently absurd situation in which his hero would not in any way recognise his heroine: that is, Achilles is not in this case exploiting the situation (he is in fact trying to disentangle himself from his own plot)." I would argue, on the other hand, that Achilles Tatius is trying to create suspense here: as far as Cleitophon and the reader are concerned, Leucippe is dead; this passage raises the possibility that she is not, just when Cleitophon has married and is about to have sex with someone else. In addition, we might think that Cleitophon the narrator, anticipating a damning reaction such as Reardon's, is retrospectively adding this observation: perhaps he did not recognise her when he saw her, but wants to give the impression that he did, albeit faintly (for her unrecognisability, see Satyrus' comments at 5.19.2).

[17] See König, this volume (pp. 191–192), for some comments on the relationship of the pair of letters to the symposium setting.

[18] Rosenmeyer 2001: 149–150. Leucippe's letter has a similar effect a few chapters later, where Melite chances upon it and learns that her rival is alive (5.24). For other examples of letters that "signify" regardless of what they actually say, see Rosenmeyer in this volume.

Cleitophon has ever seen any of her handwriting before.[19] One reaction to this is simply to say that the author requires that the character recognise his girlfriend's handwriting here for the purposes of definite authentication: the fact that Cleitophon realises that Leucippe wrote the letter means that she must be alive, and there is no danger of any assumption otherwise.[20] However, a passage from a little later might shed some light here:

> While all this was going on, unbeknownst to me, Leucippe's letter (ἡ τῆς Λευκίππης ἐπιστολή) fell out. I had been carrying it inside my tunic, attached by the tassels of my shirt. Melite picked it up without my knowledge, fearing that it was one of her letters to me (τινα τῶν πρός με αὐτῆς γραμμάτων).
>
> (5.24.1)

This is the first we are told that Melite wrote letters to Cleitophon, and offers an extra angle on her pursuit of him.[21] It seems we are not being told the whole story, not only because we largely have only Cleitophon's side of it, but also because he chooses to give us edited highlights of his side of it. If Melite wrote letters to Cleitophon which we were not told about, we might ask, for instance: were notes exchanged back in Tyre when Cleitophon was courting Leucippe, and that is how he knows her handwriting? Was this an aspect to their courtship which Cleitophon does not tell us about?[22] So, while the existence of other letters which are only alluded to, rather than "quoted", seems to grant Leucippe's letter at 5.18 a privileged status and to emphasise its importance, the possibilities of omission and of editing might introduce a note of doubt and uncertainty. Further questions are prompted by the realisation that there is no need for this letter; that is to say, Achilles Tatius could have had the critical news that Leucippe is alive brought to Cleitophon

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19 The construction used requires this sense, not that Cleitophon recognised that the letter was from Leucippe: see O'Sullivan 1980: s.v. γνωρίζω, and cf. the parallel at 2.16.2, where the meaning cannot be ambiguous. The recognition of handwriting appears to be something of a novelistic *topos*: see Dionysius recognising Callirhoe's handwriting at Chariton 8.5.13 (see 8.4.6), with Rosenmeyer 2001, 145–146, and Xenophon of Ephesus 2.10.1 (see next note). Cf. 5.24.2, where Melite begins to read Leucippe's letter, finds Leucippe's name, and recognises it "When she read it in private, and discovered Leucippe's name, the recognition of the name immediately struck her in the heart." (ὡς δὲ ἀνέγνω καθ' ἑαυτὴν γενομένη καὶ τὸ τῆς Λευκίππης εὗρεν ὄνομα, βάλλεται μὲν τὴν καρδίαν εὐθέως, γνωρίσασα τοὔνομα.)

20 Cf. Xenophon of Ephesus 2.10.1, where Manto's plot is uncovered by her handwriting, and, for the converse, the case of the presumed-dead Chaereas' letter in Chariton. In view of the similarities between Leucippe's and Chaereas' letters and situations (see section IX), extra emphasis is placed on the authenticity and authentication of Leucippe's letter.

21 Noted without comment by Rosenmeyer 2001: 153 n. 30.

22 Authorial incompetence should be the last resort as an answer to this kind of puzzle, especially when dealing with a narrator such as Cleitophon. Cf. Repath 2005 on the discrepancies between the novel's beginning and ending.

in a different manner, for example in an oral message from Satyrus.[23] What Leucippe gains from this letter, then, is one thing to bear in mind as we consider its contents and impact, but another is what the author gains from it, and those are not necessarily the same things.[24]

IV. Yours Faithfully: The Voice of Leucippe's Letter

ἐγέγραπτο δὲ τάδε·
Λευκίππη Κλειτοφῶντι τῷ δεσπότῃ μου. (3) οὕτω γάρ σε δεῖ καλεῖν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῆς δεσποίνης ἀνὴρ εἶ τῆς ἐμῆς. ὅσα μὲν διὰ σὲ πέπονθα, οἶδας· ἀνάγκη δὲ νῦν ὑπομνῆσαί σε. (4) διὰ σὲ τὴν μητέρα κατέλιπον καὶ πλάνην εἱλόμην· διὰ σὲ πέπονθα ναυαγίαν καὶ λῃστῶν ἠνεσχόμην· διὰ σὲ ἱερεῖον γέγονα καὶ καθαρμὸς καὶ τέθνηκα ἤδη δεύτερον· διὰ σὲ πέπραμαι καὶ ἐδέθην σιδήρῳ καὶ δίκελλαν ἐβάστασα καὶ ἔσκαψα γῆν καὶ ἐμαστιγώθην, ἵνα σὺ ὃ γέγονας ἄλλῃ γυναικί, καὶ ἐγὼ τῳ ἑτέρῳ ἀνδρὶ γένωμαι; μὴ γένοιτο. (5) ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ μὲν ἐπὶ τοσαύταις ἀνάγκαις διεκαρτέρησα, σὺ δὲ ἄπρατος, ἀμαστίγωτος γαμεῖς. εἴ τις οὖν τῶν πεπονημένων διὰ σὲ κεῖται χάρις, δεήθητί σου τῆς γυναικὸς ἀποπέμψαι, ὡς ἐπηγγείλατο· τὰς δὲ δισχιλίας, ἅς ὁ Σωσθένης ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ κατεβάλετο, πίστευσον ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐγγύησαι πρὸς τὴν Μελίτην ὅτι πέμψομεν· ἐγγὺς γὰρ τὸ Βυζάντιον. (6) ἐὰν δὲ ἀποτίσῃς, νόμιζε μισθόν μοι δεδωκέναι τῶν ὑπὲρ σοῦ πόνων. ἔρρωσο, καὶ ὄναιο τῶν καινῶν γάμων. ἐγὼ δὲ ἔτι σοι ταῦτα γράφω παρθένος.

This was what the letter said:
From Leucippe to Cleitophon—my master, (3) for that is what I must call you, since you are also the husband of my mistress. You know what I have suffered thanks to you; but in the present situation you need reminding. (4) Thanks to you, I left my mother and took up a life of wandering; thanks to you, I have suffered shipwrecked and endured bandits; thanks to you, I was sacrificed as an expiation, and have now died a second time; thanks to you I have been sold and bound in iron, I have wielded a mattock, dug the earth, been whipped—was all this so that what you have become to another woman, I should become to another man? Never! (5) No, I had the strength to hold out in the midst of so many trials—while you, unenslaved and unwhipped, you are married! So, if you feel any obligation towards me for the pains I have suffered thanks to you, ask your wife to send me away as she promised. As for the two thousand pieces that Sostratus paid for me, please vouch for me that I will send them to Melite. You can trust me: Byzantium is not far. (6) And if you yourself cover the debt, you should count that the compensation paid to me for my pains on your behalf. Farewell. Enjoy your new marriage. As I write this, I am still a virgin. (5.18.2–6)

[23] As Rosenmeyer 2001: 153 notes, an oral message would have been a safer method of communication, since it would have been far less likely to fall into the hands of the love rival.

[24] There is also the question of what the narrating Cleitophon might gain from it: see section VIII.

This letter is a rhetorical tour de force, packing in a number and variety of effects (the following list is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive):

1. the use and repetition of personal pronouns and adjectives (μου (2), σε, ἐμῆς, σὲ, σε (3), σὲ, σὲ, σὲ, σὲ, σὺ, ἐγώ (4), ἐγὼ, σὺ, σὲ, σου, ἐμοῦ, ἐμοὶ (5), μοι, σοῦ, ἐγὼ, σοι (6));
2. repetition of "thanks to you" (διὰ σὲ) times six (3–5), with fourfold asyndetic anaphora and ascending cola (4), and *variatio* in (6): "on your behalf" (ὑπὲρ σοῦ);
3. antithesis: "No, I … while you …" (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ … σὺ δὲ … (5));
4. chiasmus: ἵνα σὺ ὃ γέγονας ἄλλῃ γυναικί, καὶ ἐγὼ τῷ ἑτέρῳ ἀνδρὶ γένωμαι ("was all this so that what you have become to another woman, to another man I should become?") (4);
5. the vocabulary of necessity—"must" (δεῖ), "need" (ἀνάγκη) (3), "so many trials" (τοσαύταις ἀνάγκαις) (5), and of suffering—"I have suffered" (πέπονθα) (3 and 4), "I had the strength to hold out" (διεκαρτέρησα) (5), "the pains I have suffered" (τῶν πεπονημένων) (5), "my pains" (τῶν … πόνων) (6);
6. the emphatic positioning and significance of the final word—"virgin" (παρθένος).[25]

All of this seems to show that Leucippe knows how to construct a letter for maximum effect: the possibilities a written text affords for carefully wrought rhetoric are one reason a letter is used here.[26] It is also a more direct and personal method of communication than a second-hand oral message, and so carries more authority and potential impact. This impact is even more keenly felt in this case, because this letter marks an especially significant moment: it is one of the relatively few occasions on which we have Leucippe's words. Not only is our desire to get access to what Leucippe thinks and feels created and frustrated by the narrative set-up of the novel[27] and by the character of Cleitophon as narrator,[28] and not only is this desire exacerbated by some of Cleitophon's comments, since he goes out of his way to say that at certain points he did now know what she was thinking,[29] but

25 See section VI for more on this.

26 See Hodkinson 2007: 291–292, and 294. Cf. Doulamis (forthcoming) for an analysis of the rhetoric in letters in Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus.

27 See Morgan 2004: esp. 497–498. Cf. the focus on, and access to the mind of, Callirhoe for most of Chariton's novel, and the fairly even division between Anthia and Habrocomes in Xenophon of Ephesus.

28 See Haynes 2003: 56–58, and Morgan 2007: 117–119.

29 e.g. 2.8.1.

we are rarely told by Cleitophon what she said. That is, in his narration he chooses when to relate direct speech—either his own or someone else's—and he does not do this very often in her case.[30] Of course, Leucippe is more or less silenced not only by Cleitophon the narrator, but also at this stage by the plot:[31] at the crucial juncture when she sees her beloved again, her only means of genuine communication is the written word in the letter she writes him, since she cannot speak openly, and she will not get the chance to be alone with him.[32] Her verbal silence is all the more acute here, and so it is ironic that our desire to hear Leucippe's voice depends on, and seems to be satisfied by, a letter, a written text. At the same time, this letter seems to provide us with a more definitive and reliable source for what Leucippe thought and felt than reported speech ever could.[33] Indeed, Rosenmeyer has commented that: "only here [...] are we allowed to hear the woman's voice directly", and Morgan states: "on one occasion we are allowed unmediated access to her voice [...] when she [...] sends Cleitophon a letter".[34] The importance of this letter, then, is manifold, and one could go so far as to say that, as some of it is a version of the narrative so far,[35] it represents not simply

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[30] Leucippe is given direct speech at only: 2.6.2–3, 2.7.5, 2.25.1–2, 2.28.2, 2.30, 3.11.2, 3.18.5, 4.1.3–5, 4.15.1, 4.17.4, 5.5.1, 5.17.3, 5.17.4–6, 5.22.3, 6.12.1, 6.12.3–5, 6.13.1, 6.16, 6.18.6, 6.20.3, 6.21.1–2, 6.22, 8.7.1, 8.7.5, and 8.16. Many of these instances are brief, and only 6.16, 6.22, and 8.16 are longer than her letter. See, further, in section VIII. She is given indirect speech at only: 2.7.2, 2.7.4, 2.16.1, 4.17.4, 5.22.7, 7.15.2, and 8.15.3–4. Cf. 1.9.3, where Cleinias assumes Cleitophon has the opportunity to listen to her constantly.

[31] Other instances include: 3.15–22, where she is seemingly sacrificed and placed in a coffin (see especially 3.17.6, where her voice is heard, muffled); 4.6–8, where she is not given the opportunity to take part in the plans to deal with Charmides' infatuation with her; 4.9–17, where she is maddened by a potion and drugged by a doctor; 5.7, where she is apparently killed; 5.17–6.18, where she is posing as a slave called Lacaena; 7.1–12, where she is locked alone in a hut; and 8.5.3–8, where Cleitophon tells her story for her. See, also, Morales 2004: 200–201, for ways in which Leucippe's speech is constrained.

[32] See her recollection of not being able to speak to Cleitophon, at 6.16.2–4. Even when, earlier in the novel, she can speak, our attention is drawn to her general predicament in the narrative: "Leucippe had not said a word, so I said to her: 'Why so quiet, dearest? Why do you not speak to me?' 'Because,' she replied, 'I have lost my voice, ahead of losing my life.'" (3.11.2) It is tempting, with Morales 2004: 201, to read this as a communication by Achilles Tatius to the reader over the head, as it were, of the narrator; see Morgan 2007 for this kind of reading.

[33] The contrast between the way in which it is introduced ("This was what the letter said/these things had been written"—ἐγέγραπτο δὲ τάδε) with the introduction of Sostratus' letter at 1.3.5 ("what was written was as follows/of the following kind"—ἦν τὰ γεγραμμένα τοιάδε) seems to corroborate this.

[34] Rosenmeyer 2001: 149 and Morgan 2007: 119; see also Létoublon 2003: 288.

[35] See below in sections V and VI for more on this.

a fragment of the narration that Leucippe might have given, but, perhaps, a fragment of the novel that she might have written. Its nature as a written text might even make it seem more authoritative than anything Cleitophon says: Cleitophon is the narrator, but Leucippe is an author.

Further significance is lent Leucippe's letter by the fact that her current speechlessness and the resulting method of communication is foreshadowed earlier in book five by a painting which the protagonists and their friend Menelaus saw in Alexandria: it depicted scenes from the myth of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela. By this stage, the reader has been programmed by proleptic paintings in books 1 and 3 to look out for what this painting might be foreshadowing.[36] As if to emphasise this, Menelaus interpreted it as a bad omen and recommended that they not go to Chaereas' house (5.4). They went the next day instead, and Leucippe was abducted, one of the things we are led by its proximity to believe the painting foreshadows. Its proleptic significance extends beyond the immediate context, however, into the tangled relationships involving Cleitophon, Melite, Thersander and Leucippe.[37] One of the most famous parts of this myth is the tapestry that Philomela wove,[38] and Cleitophon tells how after Tereus raped Philomela:

> τὴν γλῶτταν τῆς Φιλομήλας φοβεῖται, καὶ ἕδνα τῶν γάμων αὐτῇ δίδωσι μηκέτι λαλεῖν καὶ κείρει τῆς φωνῆς τὸ ἄνθος. ἀλλὰ πλέον ἤνυσεν οὐδέν· ἡ γὰρ Φιλομήλας τέχνη σιωπῶσαν εὕρηκε φωνήν. ὑφαίνει γὰρ πέπλον ἄγγελον καὶ τὸ δρᾶμα πλέκει ταῖς κρόκαις, καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν μιμεῖται ἡ χείρ, καὶ Πρόκνης τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὰ τῶν ὤτων μηνύει καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἃ πέπονθε τῇ κερκίδι λαλεῖ.
>
> Out of fear of Philomela's tongue, he gave her as her wedding present the gift of speechlessness, clipping the flower of speech. All to no avail, for artful Philomela invented silent speech: she wove a robe to be her messenger, weaving the plot into the threads. The hand imitated the tongue: she revealed to Procne's eyes what normally meets the ears, using the shuttle to communicate what she had suffered. (5.5.4–5)

Just as the silenced Philomela can speak only through her tapestry, so Leucippe can speak only through her letter: in each case, visual means, not oral, are the woman's only method of communicating, as she conveys by her hand

[36] See especially Bartsch 1989, Nakatani 2003, Morales 2004: 37–48, Reeves 2007, and Behmenberg 2010.

[37] The mapping is not straightforward, however: see Bartsch 1989: 65–76, Konstan 1994: 68–69, and Morales 2004: 115–116, and 178–180, for different possibilities.

[38] It is listed by Cleitophon as one of the main elements at 5.3.4 and forms the focus of the narrating Cleitophon's description of the painting: 5.3.5–6.

what she cannot by her tongue.[39] One important difference, of course, is that Philomela depicts what she has suffered, whereas Leucippe describes her sufferings in words; however, the effect of the letter on Cleitophon is that he pictures what happened to her,[40] while, conversely, Philomela's tapestry, in being specific and directed at an individual, fulfils the role of a pre- or illiterate "letter". Not only, then, is one of the most famous scenes of mythology used to help thematise Leucippe's silence in the novel generally and to prefigure this particular instance, but Leucippe's letter is aligned with Philomela's tapestry as creating an iconic moment in itself, and as an artefact which changes the course of the story. The impact of Leucippe's letter is to be compared with the impact of Philomela's tapestry: they elicit powerful and mixed emotions, but in the case of the letter, the reader shares the surprise.[41]

V. (Re-)Reading Leucippe's Letter: (Re-)Reading for Pleasure?

We have already seen the impact on Cleitophon of recognising Leucippe's handwriting, but the emotional impact the contents of her letter have on him is, as we might expect, considerable: "When I read this, I experienced every sort of reaction at the same time: I burned, paled, marvelled, disbelieved, rejoiced, and brooded," (Τούτοις ἐντυχὼν πάντα ἐγινόμην ὁμοῦ· ἀνεφλεγόμην, ὠχρίων, ἐθαύμαζον, ἠπίστουν, ἔχαιρον, ἠχθόμην. 5.19.1).[42] This reaction to

[39] Bartsch 1989 does not make this connection; Morales 2004: 201, makes a brief and general comment about the myth of Philomela reflecting Leucippe's voicelessness; Marinčič 2007: 189–190, makes a brief suggestion, but seems to get the order of the text wrong and think that Philomela's tapestry might remind the reader of Leucippe's letter. Other connections include (i) Philomela's tapestry leads to a disturbed dinner (5.3.7–8, 5.5.6–8), while Leucippe's letter arrives during dinner and disturbs it (5.18.1, 5.21.1–3); (ii) there is a verbal link between the cutting out of Philomela's tongue (5.5.4) and the cutting of Leucippe's hair (5.17.3), since the same verb, κείρω, is used for both, and these are the only occurrences of the verb in the novel; and (iii) the physical violence inflicted on Philomela foreshadows Leucippe being whipped: see in the next section for the latter, with n. 5.

[40] See in the next section. If Leucippe is equated with Philomela, then Cleitophon is both Procne, as recipient of the communication, and Tereus, as the man who has caused the victim's sufferings, thus complicating even further the correspondences between the painting and the ensuing narrative.

[41] Liapis 2006 argues that Achilles Tatius bases his version of the myth on Sophocles *Tereus*: in this case, for Leucippe to be equated with Philomela would emphasise further the dramatic nature of the delivery and reading of her letter and the tragic nature of her predicament.

[42] His reaction is paralleled when Melite comes across this letter a few chapters later (5.24): she, too, experiences recognition, and she, too, feels several emotions simultaneously.

some extent, although not exactly, mirrors the reader's own reaction: amazement, disbelief, and most likely rejoicing are what we feel when realising that Leucippe is, literally, in one piece. It is not left at that, however, since, after a brief and bewildered conversation with Satyrus, Cleitophon re-reads the letter (5.19.4–6).[43]

> "ἐπέρχεται διὰ πασῶν τῶν τοῦ σώματος ὁδῶν ἡ χαρά. ἀλλ' ἰδού μοι διὰ τῶν γραμμάτων ἐγκαλεῖ." καὶ ἅμα αὖθις ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς γράμμασιν, ὡς ἐκείνην δι' αὐτῶν βλέπων, καὶ ἀναγινώσκων καθ' ἓν ἔλεγον· "Δίκαια ἐγκαλεῖς, φιλτάτη. πάντα δι' ἐμὲ ἔπαθες· πολλῶν σοι γέγονα κακῶν αἴτιος." ὡς δὲ εἰς τὰς μάστιγας καὶ εἰς τὰς βασάνους ἐγενόμην, ἃς ὁ Σωσθένης αὐτῇ παρετρίψατο, ἔκλαον ὥσπερ αὐτὰς τὰς βασάνους βλέπων αὐτῆς· ὁ γὰρ λογισμός, πέμπων τῆς ψυχῆς τὰ ὄμματα πρὸς τὴν ἀπαγγελίαν τῶν γραμμάτων, ἐδείκνυε τὰ ὁρώμενα ὡς δρώμενα. πάνυ δὲ ἠρυθρίων ἐφ' οἷς μοι τὸν γάμον ὠνείδιζεν, ὥσπερ ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ μοιχὸς κατειλημμένος. οὕτως ᾐσχυνόμην καὶ τὰ γράμματα.
>
> "Joy is running through every passage of my body! But look how she accuses me in her letter!"
>
> At the same time I scrutinised her letter again as though I were gazing upon her person. I read every single word, and said:
>
> "Your accusation is well founded, dearest! All your sufferings are my fault: I have brought many a trouble upon you."
>
> When I got to the part about the whips and tortures inflicted on her by Sosthenes, I began to weep as though I were actually witnessing her torture: for when my mind cast the eyes of my soul upon the letter's tidings, it showed what was being read as being done. I blushed deeply at the reproaches she levelled at my marriage: I felt like an adulterer surprised in the act, such was the shame inspired by the letter. (5.19.4–6)

The reaction is not just to the fact she is alive (cf. 5.19.2–3), but to what the letter says, and much of what Leucippe writes is a summary of some of the narrative which contains her,[44] that is, of the novel so far.[45] The impact that her letter has, then, can be seen as a reflexive comment on the power of the fiction: just as the letter evokes strong emotions and enables its reader to

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See Fusillo 1999 and Repath 2007b for analyses of conflicting emotions in the Greek novel. Cf. Chariton 4.5.10, where Dionysius reads Chaereas' letter to Callirhoe, and 8.5.8, where Artaxerxes reads Chaereas' letter.

[43] Cf. Dionysius at Chariton 4.5.10 (Chaereas' letter) and 8.5.14 (Callirhoe's letter).

[44] See the next section for more on this.

[45] We have here an instance of the plot-recapping familiar from the earlier novels of Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus. See Hägg 1971: 245–287, for recapitulations in these and Achilles Tatius, although he has virtually nothing on this aspect of Leucippe's letter; Rosenmeyer 2001: 150, has some brief comments.

picture things it describes,[46] so the novel's reader not only rides an emotional rollercoaster when reading this written narrative, he or she pictures its events, too. In addition, the re-reading of the letter by Cleitophon seems to suggest both the (painful?) pleasure the author thinks a reader will derive from reading his novel more than once, and, perhaps, the necessity of doing so in order to get the most out of the text.[47]

However, Cleitophon is not a straightforward reader, if such a thing can exist. In being so deeply affected by her letter and in concentrating on, and revelling in, it, Cleitophon takes us beyond the importance to the plot of Leucippe's being alive, beyond sympathy for the things she has suffered, and into the territory of a certain sort of reader: the sort of reader who is like Cleitophon.[48] It is not simply the case that the vividness of Leucippe's letter is reflected by Cleitophon's reaction, since it is also amplified and, even, defined by it. He shows an almost sadistic fascination with violence elsewhere in his narrative,[49] and this, and the shame the letter inspires in him, is what he concentrates on here.[50] Cleitophon is showing us how he reads his own story, and seems to presume that his narratee shares his predilections: we are perhaps to think that he is shaping his narrative to what he thinks his narratee will want to hear.[51] We, as readers, are caught in a situation where, in certain respects, we have no choice but to be like Cleitophon, in that the vividness and emotions he experienced at the occurrence of events such as Leucippe's disembowelment and beheading to some extent determine the feelings of the reader when he or she experiences them through the written version of Cleitophon's description: we picture the violence and

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46 See Rosenmeyer 2001: 151–152, and Morales 2004: 202–203.

47 Cf. the brief and undeveloped comment of Morales 2004: 202: "The letter is a selective revision of the narrative so far and Clitophon rereads it sentence by sentence, an interesting and pointed internal mode of reading".

48 See Whitmarsh 2003 for different ways of reading the principal narrative of the novel: the levels and types of irony, allied to the levels of narration, mean that there is a complex variety of implied readers and narratees, and so each actual reader has a difficult task in knowing how and where to situate him- or herself.

49 See especially 6.21–22, where Cleitophon is narrating events and speeches at which he was not present: see section VIII. For discussion of violence and voyeurism in *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, see Anderson 1982: 24–25, Konstan 1994: 60–73, Haynes 2003: 57–58, Morales 2004; see also Nimis 2009: 87–89, on the salacious version of the Philomela story presented by the description of her tapestry at 5.3.5–7.

50 The use of the Platonic formulation "the eyes of the soul" (cf. *Sophist* 254a10–b1 and *Republic* 533d2) reinforces by contrast both the grim nature of what is pictured and the quasi-sadistic nature of his picturing and describing it.

51 See 8.5.5, and section VIII below.

dwell on it, fascinated and repelled in equal measure by the car-crash narrative. However, the reading and re-reading of Leucippe's letter enables and encourages us to reflect on how we read the wider narrative: do we succumb to Cleitophon's focalisation and fetishes, playing the part of his implied narratee? Or do we try to resist his reading and retelling of his own story and to see through and beyond the sensationalism to the "real" human suffering?

These are particularly pressing questions because for Cleitophon the vividness of the letter does not depend only on what it says; in fact, the letter does no more than list Leucippe's sufferings and elaborates very little (5.18.4). While Cleitophon actively uses his imagination to see her being whipped and implicitly invites his narratee to do the same, he is at an advantage because he has already seen the results:

> … ὁρᾷς δὲ καὶ πληγαῖς ὡς ἐξανέ με πολλαῖς." καὶ ἅμα διανοίξασα τὸν χιτῶνα δείκνυσι τὰ νῶτα διαγεγραμμένα ἔτι οἰκτρότερον. ὡς οὖν ταῦτα ἠκούσαμεν, ἐγὼ μὲν συνεχύθην· καὶ γάρ τι ἐδόκει Λευκίππης ἔχειν·

> … But look how he has shredded me with his numerous lashes!" As she [sc. Leucippe] spoke, she parted her tunic and showed us the marks etched onto her back, an even more pitiable sight. When we heard this, I for my part was extremely upset, since she seemed to have something of Leucippe about her. (5.17.6–7)

Cleitophon has seen Leucippe's tortures, inscribed on her body. She willingly reveals her back, which is probably the most of her body that Cleitophon has seen, and there may be a sexual undercurrent to her behaviour here as well: we should not rule out the "real" Leucippe being as manipulative and self-serving as Cleitophon.[52] Her primary aim, though, is surely to show how much she has suffered: her body is a complementary and authenticating text,[53] branded with her sufferings, which results in Cleitophon being able to appreciate what she says in her letter even more. As readers who have not seen this other text—her body—we should take stock here of how we read Leucippe's letter, Cleitophon's reading of it, and his narration as a whole: where does violence stop and pleasure begin, or vice versa, or are they inseparable in enjoying the escapades and perils of a good-looking

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52 See the next section, and cf., e.g. her disingenuous speech at 2.25.1–2. Cf. Cleitophon showing (off) the scar on his thigh at 8.5.1.

53 While the mutilation of Philomela's body meant she had to find other means of communication, Leucippe uses the mutilation of her own body as such a means. See König 2008: 137–144, for the equivalences and relationships between bodies and texts, with a particular focus on the Roman novels.

young woman on whose body all sorts of violence are inflicted, or apparently inflicted? Should we really be, not just joining in with Cleitophon in imagining Leucippe being whipped, but imagining the woman, imagining her being whipped, and imagining the marks on her back which tell her story? Can we help it?

VI. Reading Leucippe's Narrative: Redirected Male

However, it is hardly the case that Cleitophon's reading of the letter is determined by only his own predispositions, or that Leucippe's letter is a straightforward rendering of her side of the narrative. In fact, her letter shows her ability and willingness to manipulate both her story and her narratee, the recipient of the letter. In the first place, her comments that Cleitophon has married, without being sold and whipped, are unfair: not only had he thought she had been dead for some months, but she has no reason to think that he could have possibly thought she was alive. Furthermore, as Cleitophon relates it, his devotion to her has been such that he has so far, in her memory, refused to consummate his new marriage.[54] This chiding of Cleitophon goes hand in hand with what Leucippe might hope to achieve with this letter. The surface reading is that Leucippe is genuinely resentful and desperate and wants to go home: the rhetorical force outlined above is designed to make Cleitophon feel obliged to enable her to do so, and a reaction of shame and guilt of the sort she gets from Cleitophon is precisely the one she is aiming at. However, even though she sees that he is now married to someone else, she structures her letter to emphasise her marriageable status at two key points: (i) after detailing the sufferings she has endured, she twists the expected climax at the middle of the letter, from "was all this so that you could marry someone else" to "was all this so that what you have become to another woman, I should become to another man?"; and (ii) the final word of her letter is "virgin" (παρθένος).[55] This suggests that she wants him to want her again, for whatever reason. This is not a letter written by a naïve and resourceless girl: Leucippe may be in a desperate situation, but she is more than capable of attempting to write her way out of it and, possibly, of turning it towards her own advantage.[56]

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[54] She will find this out before long: see the next section.

[55] See Rosenmeyer 2001: 150–151, for the second of these.

[56] This analysis is reinforced by a comparison with Chaereas' letter and the circumstances of its composition (Chariton 4.4.5–10): Chaereas is prompted by Mithridates to write a

The artful nature of her letter is demonstrated not only by the reactions it provokes and in the way it provokes them, but also by the questions it does not answer, since her summary of events is incomplete. At 5.19.1, Cleitophon expresses his surprise Leucippe is alive and, at 5.20.1, asks how she was saved, which is precisely what the reader wants to know; he asks the question because Leucippe's letter does not say how she escaped death.[57] While it is true that the simple fact she is alive is clearly the most important factor for the narrative at this point, this is revealed immediately by her handwriting: how she survived having her head cut off is the part of the narrative which we are missing and which this letter could, but does not, provide (see the gap in her summary at 5.18.4). What she does write is what Cleitophon, and so the reader, knows or can surmise from what he/we have seen. Achilles Tatius the author is clearly aiming for narratorial suspense—in fact we are kept waiting until nearly the very end of the novel for the solution to this puzzle (8.16), but what might Leucippe's aim be in not mentioning it? Does she think that Cleitophon does not care any more and so she is simply determined to get home? Or is she dangling a narrative carrot to promote Cleitophon's interest and a response from him?[58] This omission is arguably the most important rhetorical ploy in the letter, designed to interest Cleitophon not only in her, but also in her story. In this way, Cleitophon's desire for her, and his, and our, desire for her narrative become intertwined: this can be read as another reflexive comment, this time on the quasi-erotic power of the fiction.

VII. Cleitophon's Letter: Lost in the Post?

Cleitophon cannot go and see Leucippe without arousing Melite's suspicion, so he writes back to her: his letter, too, has the potential to change the course of the plot. Cleitophon asks Satyrus for advice on what to write, and the latter replies: "I am no wiser than you … but Eros himself will dictate to you" (αὐτός σοι ὁ Ἔρως ὑπαγορεύσει). (5.20.4) This is what Cleitophon produces:

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letter, while Leucippe, as far as we know, is not, emphasising both her greater isolation and initiative; in addition, Mithridates offers Chaereas advice, telling him to make Callirhoe sad and happy, and to make her seek him and summon him, and his letter is relatively open in its aims; Leucippe's real aims, on the other hand, do not necessarily coincide with the meaning of the words in her letter.

[57] Cf. the opening of Chaereas' letter at Chariton 4.4.7: "To Callirhoe from Chaereas: I am alive, and I am alive thanks to Mithridates …".

[58] It is not clear from 5.20.1 whether she has told Satyrus: it is possible he, too, is keeping Cleitophon in suspense.

> χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ δέσποινα Λευκίππη. δυστυχῶ μὲν ἐν οἷς εὐτυχῶ, ὅτι σὲ παρὼν παροῦσαν ὡς ἀποδημοῦσαν ὁρῶ διὰ γραμμάτων.[59] εἰ μὲν οὖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν περιμενεῖς,[60] μηδὲν προκαταγινώσκουσά μου, μαθήσῃ τὴν σήν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἴ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσι παρθενία· εἰ δέ με χωρὶς ἀπολογίας ἤδη μεμίσηκας, ὄμνυμί σοι τοὺς σώσαντάς σε θεούς, ὡς ἐν βραχεῖ σοι τὸ ἔργον ἀπολογήσομαι. ἔρρωσό μοι, φιλτάτη, καὶ ἵλεως γένοιο.
>
> Greetings Leucippe, my mistress! I am unfortunate where I am fortunate, because, although we are both in the same place, I see you as absent through a letter. If you will wait for the truth, not condemning me in advance, you will find that I have imitated your virginity, if there be a male equivalent of virginity. But if you despise me already, before I have defended myself, I swear by the gods who saved you that I shall deliver a defence of my acts shortly. Farewell, dearest, and set your mind at peace. (5.20.5)

The contents of the letter speak not of the influence of love;[61] rather, much of what Cleitophon writes is a *cento* constructed from the words and ideas of Leucippe's letter and, especially, his dialogue with Satyrus.[62] His letter, too, contains rhetorical effects:

1. sophistic reversal of the language of mastery—from the literal of Leucippe's letter ("From Leucippe to Cleitophon—my master (τῷ δεσπότῃ μου), for that is what I must call you, since you are also the husband of my mistress (τῆς δεσποίνης … τῆς ἐμῆς)." 5.18.2–3), to the metaphorical–"my lady Leucippe" (ὦ δέσποινα Λευκίππη);[63]

[59] This sentence has caused translators difficulty and its text has been suspected: see Vilborg 1962: 102 and O'Sullivan 1980: 303, s.v. ὁράω (4) (a). However, its nature is best considered in its rhetorical and epistolary context: see in text below.

[60] I follow O'Sullivan 1980: 349, in the accentuation of περιμενεῖς, making it future tense instead of the MSS. present.

[61] Cf. Cleitophon's attribution of the inspiration behind Melite's speech to Eros at 5.27.1.

[62] In addition to 1. in the list of rhetorical effects in text, compare: (i) "do not condemn me" (μηδὲν προκαταγινώσκουσά μου)—"she has condemned me" (κατέγνωκεν ἡμῶν 5.20.1); (ii) "I have imitated your virginity, if there be a male equivalent of virginity" (τὴν σήν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἴ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσι παρθενία)—"virgin" (παρθένος 5.18.6); (iii) "before I have defended myself" (χωρὶς ἀπολογίας), and "I shall deliver a defence" (ἀπολογήσομαι)—"How will the defendant respond?" (πῶς ἀπολογήσομαι 5.20.1); (iv) "But if you hate me already" (εἰ δέ με … ἤδη μεμίσηκας)—"and perhaps I have even become the object of her hatred" (τάχα δὲ καὶ μεμισήμεθα 5.20.1); (v) "I swear" (ὄμνυμί)—"I myself have given her my word" (κἀγὼ γὰρ αὐτῇ διωμοσάμην 5.20.2) (Satyrus); (vi) "Farewell" (ἔρρωσο)—"Farewell" (ἔρρωσο 5.18.6); (vii) "dearest" (φιλτάτη)—"dearest" (φιλτάτη 5.19.5); and (viii) "at peace" (ἵλεως)—"pacify" (ἱλάσασθαι 5.20.1).

[63] Rosenmeyer 2001: 152. Doulamis (forthcoming) suggests, plausibly to my mind, that Achilles Tatius is here engaging intertextually with the ways in which δέσποινα is used in the pair of letters between Manto and Habrocomes at Xenophon of Ephesus 2.5.1–2 and 2.5.4.

2. oxymoron:[64] "I am unfortunate where I am fortunate" (δυστυχῶ μὲν ἐν οἷς εὐτυχῶ); "because, although we are both in the same place, I see you as absent" (σὲ παρὼν παροῦσαν ὡς ἀποδημοῦσαν ὁρῶ); "I have imitated your virginity, if there be a male equivalent of virginity."[65] (τὴν σήν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἴ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσι παρθενία· ...);
3. polyptoton: σὲ παρὼν παροῦσαν ὡς ἀποδημοῦσαν ὁρῶ;
4. hyperbaton: σὲ παρὼν παροῦσαν ὡς ἀποδημοῦσαν ὁρῶ; τὴν σήν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον;
5. legalistic language: "not condemning me in advance" (μηδὲν προκαταγινώσκουσά μου); "before I have defended myself" (χωρὶς ἀπολογίας); "I shall deliver a defence" (ἀπολογήσομαι).[66]

Capping these effects is Cleitophon's use of the simultaneously clichéd and paradoxical comment on the distancing effect of her letter—clichéd, because a letter reminding its recipient that the sender is absent is a standard *topos* in epistolary literature,[67] and paradoxical, because they are physically close, a situation in which one would not normally need to use epistolary communication. The effects outlined above are perhaps more sophisticated than those in Leucippe's letter, but they create a rather forced and artificial feel, which strikes a false note compared to Leucippe's apparently anguished appeal.[68] Cleitophon's self-obsession is palpable too—he seems concerned primarily with how he is perceived by her and so with his chances of getting back with her, rather than with expressing sympathy for her plight.

It is not just in terms of emotional impact that this letter has no chance of packing the same punch as Leucippe's, but also in its importance to the plot. While Cleitophon's is the only letter in this novel we see being written, as it were, it is the only letter that is not delivered.[69] We are not told that Leucippe did not receive it, but her demeanour in her conversation with Melite at 5.22.3—even allowing for Cleitophon colouring her reaction for

64 See Laplace 2007: 385–386, for Achilles Tatius' fondness of this device.

65 The comment about male *parthenia* is famous and has received treatment: see Goldhill 1995: esp. ch. 2, for discussion, and Morales 2004: 212–213, for some comments.

66 His self-defensiveness foreshadows the court scenes which will dominate the final two books, where, ironically, he will condemn himself as the architect of Leucippe's murder (7.7.2–6).

67 See Plepelits 1980: 247 n. 149, and the introduction to this volume (pp. 11–16); see Rosenmeyer 2001: 152, on this aspect of Cleitophon's letter.

68 See, further, in the next section for reading the rhetoric of Cleitophon's letter.

69 Rosenmeyer's 2001: 152, comment that "we know that she [sc. Leucippe] has read it by the next scene" lacks justification.

us after the event—and her soliloquy at 6.16 both imply that she did not. The job the letter is supposed to do—that of persuading Leucippe that he has not had sex with Melite—is done by Melite herself (5.22), who bemoans her lack of satisfaction to "Lacaena" under the impression that she is a Thessalian witch who can help her. Ironically, Melite the love rival and would-be seductress is a much more trustworthy messenger than Cleitophon, or a letter from him, could ever be. The credibility or otherwise of the report and of the possible reporters might explain why Leucippe does not seem to have received Cleitophon's letter: at 5.21.1, Cleitophon entrusts it to Satyrus, but Satyrus does not believe Cleitophon has not had sex with Melite (5.20.2–3). Perhaps he thought that Leucippe would not believe it either (why would she?), and so decided to hang on to the letter.[70] Indeed, Cleitophon himself seems to think what he says is unbelievable when he asks Satyrus to say suitable things about him to her (5.21.1).[71] Cleitophon's letter is thus the opposite of Leucippe's: it is rendered untrustworthy and seemingly unreliable by its author's circumstances, rather than being definitive and dramatic proof of an unexpected state of affairs; and it is apparently denied the opportunity even of being able to have any effect on the plot, let alone turning it upside down, since it is a narrative dead-end. The very redundancy, in plot terms, of Cleitophon's letter seems to increase the power of Leucippe's. On the authorial level, it exists apparently only in order to show Cleitophon's self-absorption and the fact he is not believed even by his own confidant. Satyrus' attitude to what Cleitophon says, and by implication his attitude to what he writes, acts as another internal guide to the reader, and although Satyrus (as far as we know) is wrong to disbelieve him, he is proved right by the end of the book, when Cleitophon has sex with Melite roughly a day later and belies his earlier protests to the contrary. If those witnessing and participating in Cleitophon's adventures with him do not believe everything he says and have their suspicions ultimately proved correct, perhaps we should carry that attitude to his entire narration.[72]

70 Of course, if she *has* read it, she does not seem to believe Cleitophon either!

71 This is made more problematic by association for the "second-time reader" when Thersander says more or less exactly the same thing to Sosthenes; compare: "Make sure you say suitable things about me" (ὅπως εἴπῃς τὰ εἰκότα περὶ ἐμοῦ) (6.7.9) with: "I gave Satyrus the letter, and asked him to tell her suitable things about me" (τὰ εἰκότα εἰπεῖν πρὸς αὐτὴν περὶ ἐμοῦ).

72 Cf. Cleitophon's claim to unlikely veracity at 1.2.2. See Morgan 2007: 111–113, on this and other passages which raise similar questions.

VIII. Cleitophon's Narrative: Yours Sincerely?

In fact, the reader is given a strong indication that not everything Cleitophon says is to be believed, if any of it is to be believed at all, by the narrating Cleitophon himself. In the final book, Cleitophon narrates the events (of which he is aware) of his narrative so far to an internal audience (8.5), emphasising his self-control in the face of Melite and omitting the fact he did have sex with her (8.5.2–3), and putting his spin on what happened to Leucippe:

> "τὰ δὲ Λευκίππης τῶν ἐμῶν μείζονα. πέπραται, δεδούλευκε, γῆν ἔσκαψε, σεσύληται τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ κάλλος· τὴν κουρὰν ὁρᾷς." καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον ὡς ἐγένετο διηγούμην. κἀν τῷδε κατὰ τὸν Σωσθένην καὶ Θέρσανδρον γενόμενος ἐξῇρον καὶ τὰ αὐτῆς ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ τἀμά, ἐρωτικῶς αὐτῇ χαριούμενος ἀκούοντος τοῦ πατρός· …
>
> "But Leucippe's story outdoes mine. She has been sold into slavery, she has tilled the soil, the beauty has been pillaged from her head: look at her haircut!" Then I narrated the story, every detail of it. Then, when I reached the part about Sosthenes and Thersander, I elevated her story even more than I had done mine, in an amorous attempt to gratify her, given that her father was listening. (8.5.3–5)

As Morgan observes, Cleitophon (says he) talks up the bit of the narrative where his documentary authority is weakest, where Leucippe fends off the attentions of Thersander, abetted by his henchman Sosthenes, in book 6.[73] One might add to this that Cleitophon has hardly had time to hear what happened to Leucippe between their reunion at the end of book 7 and his narration in 8.5. But questions about his reliability must inevitably radiate out from what he says about his narration in book 8, to episodes where he was not present, and, ultimately, to his narration as a whole, bringing doubt on everything he says.[74]

Letters, by contrast, seem immune to this distortion, given their apparent "separate identity".[75] But this is illusory: in the first place, there is, as for everything else Cleitophon reports, the question of to what extent he could remember them accurately. Second, there is the question of whether his tendency to tailor his narrative might have affected his reporting of the letters, which are, in his narration, not written texts, but oral reports of written texts.[76] Why, for instance, should we not imagine that what he

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73 Morgan 2007: 105–111.

74 See Morgan 2007: 110 and Whitmarsh 2011: 91–93.

75 See in section II, with n. 12, and in section IV, with n. 34.

76 The full picture is that they belong to a written version of the anonymous narrator's oral

portrays as his off-the-cuff letter is in fact a later construction designed to be as rhetorical and self-justificatory as possible, for the purposes of the narration he was engaged in? This would add a layer to the humour, for, while it would rebound on Cleitophon the character if we believed that he wrote such a letter at a moment of intense emotions, he is shown up the more if we think that his needlessly rhetorical, self-obsessed, legalistic, pedantic, clichéd, and derivative letter is something he elaborates or concocts later under the impression that his narratee will find it impressive.

More important, given its centrality to the plot and the importance it seems to have as evidence for the "real" Leucippe, is what this does to our reading of *her* letter: we need to ask whether it is more likely that Cleitophon remembers the contents of her letter accurately, or that the arch-rhetorician gives a "Thucydidean" version of it,[77] reporting the gist of what she said. Could it be that the refined rhetoric of the letter supposedly written by his beloved in a highly emotional state does not accurately reflect what she "actually" wrote? Furthermore, could it be that the man who fashions his own story and that of others to portray himself, and them, in a better light has "interfered" in the contents of Leucippe's letter?[78] The answer, of course, is yes, and one does not have to think too hard to produce a reason why: the letter Cleitophon says he received reflects Leucippe's devotion to him and ensures Cleitophon is still aware of her availability, suggesting that Cleitophon is the sort of man whom a girl would still want, even after so much suffering and seeing him married to someone else.

This reading is supported by a comparison with the direct speech which Leucippe is given in Cleitophon's narration (italics indicates Cleitophon's absence, with her interlocutor/s in parentheses, and underlined indicates

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version of Cleitophon's oral version of written texts. See Marinčič 2007 and Ní Mheallaigh 2007 for discussions of the relationship(s) between textuality and orality in *Leucippe and Cleitophon*.

[77] See the famous comment at Thucydides 1.22 on the impossibility of recollecting, and so of recording, speeches accurately.

[78] Cleitophon's narration in book 8 is linked with the letters and their context in book 5 by certain similarities: Cleitophon's introduction of Leucippe's story (8.5.4), highlighted by the use of direct speech, alludes to the events of book 5, with verbal echoes of her letter: (πέπραται ... γῆν ἔσκαψε (8.5.4)—πέπραμαι ... ἔσκαψα γῆν (5.18.4)); Cleitophon makes comments about male virginity at 5.20.5 ("if there be a male equivalent of virginity" (εἴ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσι παρθενία)) and 8.5.7 ("If there be such a thing as virginity in a man" (εἴ τις ἄρα ἔστιν ἀνδρὸς παρθενία)—see Anderson 1982: 117–118 n. 11, on the connection; and Cleitophon omits an important part of his story (sex with Melite—8.5.3)—Leucippe does likewise (5.18.4). See Repath 2007a for an analysis of another aspect of Achilles Tatius' intratextuality and its ramifications for reading the wider narrative.

that Leucippe was speaking as "Lacaena"): 2.6.2–3, 2.7.5, *2.25.1–2* (Pantheia), *2.28.2* (Pantheia), 2.30, 3.11.2, 3.18.5, 4.1.3–5, 4.15.1, 4.17.4, 5.5.1, 5.17.3, 5.17.4–6, *5.22.3* (Melite), *6.12.1* (Sosthenes), *6.12.3–5* (Sosthenes), *6.13.1* (Sosthenes), *6.16* (soliloquy), *6.18.6* (Thersander), *6.20.3* (Thersander/Sosthenes), *6.21.1–2* (Thersander), *6.22* (Thersander), 8.7.1, *8.7.5* (Sostratus), and 8.16. It is surely no coincidence that in all of her direct speech which Cleitophon did not hear at the time, Leucippe is defending her reputation and/or virginity (2.25.1–2, 2.28.2, 6.12.1, 6.12.3–5, 6.13.1, 6.18.6, 6.20.3, 6.21.1–2, 6.22, 8.7.5), outlining what she has suffered (6.13.1, 6.16, 6.20.3, 6.22) and showing her devotion to Cleitophon (6.12.3–5, 6.16 and 6.18.6).[79] In other words, whenever Cleitophon "allows" Leucippe to speak in such circumstances, she expresses sentiments which resemble those in her letter. If we read the speeches as rhetorical constructions on the part of the narrating Cleitophon, and to a greater or lesser extent we have no choice,[80] then it seems we are invited to regard Leucippe's letter as being part of that same strategy. Leucippe can only ever be a construct of the narrating Cleitophon,[81] and any feelings or thoughts she is supposed to have had or expressed, by any means, are given her by a later, controlling presence: if she is protective of her virginity, it is because Cleitophon wants her to be; if she is devoted to Cleitophon, it is because he makes her so. Whether we like it or not, it is not just her speeches, but Leucippe's letter, too, which tells us more about Cleitophon than it does about her: Leucippe's letter is not a fragment of the narration that she might have given, not a fragment of the novel that she might have written—it is a fragment of the narration she might have given or the novel she might have written, if Cleitophon had been giving or writing it for her.[82]

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[79] 5.22.3 is the partial exception, but even here she appears to be jealous of Melite's marriage to Cleitophon.

[80] This is additional to the question of whether whatever Leucippe might have told him were her own rhetorical constructions elaborating on whatever she might have "actually" said.

[81] This, of course, is to leave aside any role or influence the anonymous narrator might be thought to have: one could see him, at one end of the spectrum, as a neutral conduit for Cleitophon's narrative, or, towards the other, as someone who presents us with a secondary narrator whom he wants to portray as the sort of character who constructs his narrative and its elements in a certain way.

[82] This reading builds on the readings of Haynes 2003: 58 and 60–61, and Morales 2004: 199–220, which address the apparent subjectivity in Leucippe's speeches and ways in which it, and they, are problematised, but without dealing fully with the narrative set-up, and Morgan 2007: 119, who does not extend his questioning of Cleitophon's narrative as far as Leucippe's letter.

IX. Intertextual Mail

The final factor I shall consider which has a bearing on a reading of Leucippe's letter brings the discussion full circle, to a consideration of the intertextuality between the content and narrative context of Leucippe's letter, and of Chaereas' letter at Chariton 4.4.7–10, which I described in section 1.[83] Put briefly, in each, a presumed-dead person writes to their beloved, detailing what they have undergone, and expressing dismay at the news of their remarriage.[84] On one level, it is obviously the author Achilles Tatius who is enabling any intertextuality, but there is an additional possibility: that Cleitophon is simultaneously inviting a comparison with the letter and situation in Chariton's novel.[85] This possiblity is encouraged by consideration of some of the ways in which Cleitophon constructs his own story and his part in it: he invokes mythical comparanda in his narration,[86] he alludes to literature, especially Homer,[87] and, closer to the subject at hand, his own letter at 5.20.5 is constructed on the basis of what he has read and said and heard.[88] Moreover, it has been suggested that Cleitophon is narrating his past adventures as if they were a novel,[89] and the nature of the book he famously uses as a prop at 1.6.6 is unspecified, leaving open the tantalising

[83] See also nn. 20, 56, and 57, for particular points of comparison.

[84] In addition, both letters are received during dinner (Chariton 4.5.7–10, Achilles Tatius 5.18.1)—see König in this volume (pp. 191–192), and Leucippe's letter is also intercepted and read by the love rival, but only after the intended recipient has read it—see Rosenmeyer 2001: 153. There is not the space here for a full, detailed analysis of the intertextuality. See Whitmarsh 2011: 165, who, in comparing Melite and Dionysius as "viable alternatives", notes the place of the letters in signalling the "intertextual relationship between the two", but the "precise allusions" he notes in n. 123 are to Chaereas' prior speech in the presence of Mithridates (4.3.9–10), not to his letter. In fact, however, this enhances the intertextuality, as Achilles Tatitus combines Chaereas' attack of 4.3.10 with the melodramatic pleading of his letter in Leucippe's subtler and more devious letter. There is an additional, corroborating element in this allusive relationship: Leucippe's current predicament was caused by the fact that she was abducted from Pharos by pirates; these pirates were acting on the instructions of a man who had fallen in love with Leucippe; this man was a certain Chaereas, whom I think must have been named partially at least with Chariton's character in mind. The result is that Leucippe ends up having to write a letter similar to the one Chaereas wrote in Chariton's novel, because of the actions of a man called Chaereas.

[85] Xenophon of Ephesus could be included in this, too,—see n. 63.

[86] See Morgan 2007: esp. 113–114, and cf. Conte 1996 on Petronius' *Satyrica*.

[87] See e.g. 2.15.3, and 2.34.7.

[88] See n. 62.

[89] Morgan 1997: 179–186 (esp. 185), Morgan 2004: 501–502, and Morgan 2007; cf. Whitmarsh 2003.

possibility that it is a novel.[90] While the idea that Cleitophon himself is deliberately evoking Chariton cannot be proved and so should not be pushed, it would both enhance a reading of Leucippe's letter as a rhetorically, and artificially, constructed text, and add a dimension to Cleitophon's self-construction and characterisation. For, while the intertextuality at the authorial level creates an ironic disjunction between, on the one hand, Cleitophon's presumed aims in his narration of Leucippe's letter of highlighting her sufferings and his status as a man worth suffering for, and, on the other hand, his being placed in the position of Callirhoe and so feminised;[91] this irony would be compounded if Cleitophon were thought to be trying to inscribe himself in the novelistic tradition by shaping this aspect of his narrative to fit, unaware of the full implications for his masculinity.[92]

X. Conclusion: Take Care

The principal narrative in *Leucippe and Cleitophon* is destabilised not just by the internal narration and its layers, but also by the problematic nature of Cleitophon as a narrator. Because of this, it is tempting to look for other versions of the story which will be more reliable or provide a different perspective, and Leucippe's letter, with its apparently privileged status, seems to be a good candidate for presenting such an alternative version. However, like almost everything else in this novel, the letters are embroiled inextricably in the fact that Cleitophon is the narrator, in what he narrates, and in the way he narrates it. So, although Leucippe's letter seems to provide a measure of documentary authentication, both for what happened to her and for what she felt about it, it can have no such authority.[93] It is ironic, then, that while in the case of stand-alone letters the wider narrative tends to require reconstruction from within the letter and/or correspondence; and while in the case of a text such as Chariton's, for instance, the wider narrative and

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90 See Morales 2004: 78–82 (esp. 79), and Morgan 2007 (esp. 117); cf. Whitmarsh 2003: 199.

91 See Jones 2012: esp. 238–262, on the feminisation of Cleitophon. Cf. Morales 2004: 220–226, and Whitmarsh 2011: 165, on the masculine role Melite plays in her relationship with Cleitophon.

92 This kind of reading could be applied to other instances of intertextuality, of course. So e.g. Whitmarsh 2011: 91–92, explores the intertextuality of Cleitophon's narration at 8.4–5 with that of Chaereas at Chariton 8.7.3–8.8.11: supposing that it is Cleitophon as well as Achilles Tatius who is alluding to Chariton would add an extra angle to this.

93 Cf. the pseudo-documentarism involving letters in texts such as Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders Beyond Thule*: see Ní Mheallaigh 2008.

the letters mutually complement each other; in *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, the wider narrative can be seen as a hindrance rather than a help, rendering the letters of the protagonists less readable. But it is not just the case that the narrative context affects our reading of the letters: our reading of the letters and their context affects our reading of the narrative. Just as Cleitophon's narration in book 8, with which the letters are linked,[94] reflects upon his entire narration to the anonymous narrator, so the letters and their context can be seen as a *mise en abyme* for Cleitophon's narration, and perhaps for the novel as a whole:[95] they are rhetorical constructions, potentially at multiple levels, designed to manipulate their narratee(s) through devices such as tactical narrative summary and teasing omission; they raise questions of believability (can Leucippe really be alive? can Cleitophon really not have had sex with Melite? how much of the "truth" is *anyone* telling?); and they act as a reflexive commentary on the kinds of narratees and responses such narratives and such a narrative might suggest and require. Perhaps the letters do have a special status after all: it is just that their importance for the narrative, its characters, and its narrators is not what it first appears.

Achilles Tatius skilfully exploits and plays with epistolary form and its attendant *topoi*, including questions of authenticity and authentication; the (apparent) revelation of true feelings; rhetorical persuasion and emotional manipulation; narrative possibilities and complexities, especially the filling in of, and drawing attention to, narrative gaps; issues of presence and absence; and problems of believability and access to the truth. Combined with all this are metaliterary questions of types of reading and response; intratextuality; and intertextuality, especially with Chariton, with implications for the gendering of the narrator. These are all factors which characterise Achilles Tatius' novel as a whole, and his letters are thus an integral part of, and an especially clear and provocative reflection of, his overall strategy. There are multiple ways in which an author, especially an author of fiction, can use letters embedded in his or her narrative; a devious author of fiction can stretch the boundaries of what it means to read a letter, and Achilles Tatius does this at the same time as, and as part of, stretching the boundaries of what it means to read an ancient Greek novel. Trying to read the letters in book 5 may be an ultimately frustrating process in itself, but it gives us a crucial perspective in trying to understand Achilles Tatius' attitude to his narrator, his reader, and his genre.

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94 See n. 78.

95 Compare Kasprzyk, this volume (p. 283), on Apollonius' letters as a *mise en abyme* in Philostr. *VA*.

LETTERS IN PHILOSTRATUS' *LIFE OF APOLLONIUS OF TYANA*

Dimitri Kasprzyk

According to Philostratus of Lemnos, Philostratus' nephew, Apollonius is, alongside Dio Chrysostom, the model of the epistolary genre with philosophical content.[1] This judgement implies that there existed one or several collections of letters by the sage, which provided a first-hand source of information for the author of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Philostratus indeed writes at the beginning of his work that he found information especially "from [Apollonius'] own letters" (1.2). Like Plutarch, who uses his characters' correspondence to recount certain facts, Philostratus relies on Apollonius' letters to attribute certain words or actions to him. But similarly to letters in Plutarch, the authenticity of Apollonius' *Letters* is questionable,[2] not only from the viewpoint of modern criticism, but also sometimes in the author's own opinion.[3] A question we must therefore ask concerns the role which Philostratus plays in their reception, transmission, or even their creation. The relationships between the letters Philostratus uses, whether quoted or mentioned, and those that are transmitted by other means are varied. If Philostratus used existing letters, did he borrow them from one or several collections, or did he collect them in isolation?[4] Did he retranscribe, paraphrase or rewrite them? Or, inversely, did he invent some of them, in particular from facts belonging to the legend of his character? It is impossible to answer this question, particularly since Philostratus adopts a many-sided and sophisticated attitude vis-à-vis the tradition, which in its turn often has a complex relationship with the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Philostratus, a versatile writer and author of the *Love Letters*, which also include fictitious letters addressed to historical figures, did not confine himself to collecting the letters passively. In the same way that a large number of the *Love*

[1] Philostratus of Lemnos, *Dialexis* on epistolography (text and translation in Malherbe 1988).

[2] When in italics and upper case, the term *Letter* refers to the corpus of Apollonius' *Letters* that manuscripts have transmitted independently of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

[3] It is, for example, the case for the letters of Brutus: cf. Moles 1997.

[4] He says that he himself assembled a large number of letters (7.35) and explains that a collection kept by Hadrian did not include all the letters (8.20).

Letters were subjected to formal transformations which makes their epistolary nature almost unrecognizable,[5] Philostratus engages in a series of generic, structural and enunciative manipulations of Apollonius' letters, by inserting them in a narrative text and a precise dramatic context, which tend to alter radically their form, content, function and meaning. Philostratus thereby aligns himself with the ancient tradition of manipulating letters as objects and as texts, but using a particular strategy and—rather paradoxically—obscuring the voice of the person whose letters he is quoting.

I. Letters and Structure of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* contains around forty passages in which a letter, an exchange of letters, or the correspondence of one person (generally Apollonius) is mentioned.[6] These passages are distributed evenly throughout the work, with a greater concentration in the two central books (3 and 4).[7] If we take into account only those letters quoted partially or in full, this concentration is even more marked, particularly in books 4, 5 and, to a lesser extent, 6.[8] While it is unlikely that Philostratus sought a perfectly balanced distribution of the letters, it is clear they have a structuring function in the *Life* as a whole: letters appear at the end of six books out of eight, a proportion which appears too high to be coincidental; even if these letters are not always the final point, their presence at important points in the structure of the work is striking. The sending of letters often accompanies the hero's journeys which constitute a major process in the symbolical construction of the *Life*,[9] and which mainly coincide with the division into books.

So in 2.40–41, the Indian king Phraotes writes a letter of recommendation to the gymnosophists just before the departure of Apollonius, who is about to visit them. The letter asks them to send back Apollonius only after bestowing their knowledge on him, which he announces precisely at the end

[5] Cf. Rosenmeyer 2001, 330–332.

[6] Cf. 1.2, 7, 15, 23, 24, 32; 2.17, 32, 40; 3.16, 28, 38, 51; 4.5, 22, 26, 27, 33, 40, 46; 5.2, 10, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41; 6.18, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33; 7.8, 10, 31, 35, 42; 8.7 (*bis*), 20, 27, 28.

[7] The distribution is as follows (the first figure corresponds to the number of passages in which letters are mentioned, and the second to the number of letters): book 1 = 4 / 3; 2 = 3 / 4; 3 = 4 / 4; 4 = 7 / 11; 5 = 7 / 10; 6 = 5 / 6; 7 = 5 / 5; 8 = 5 / 7.

[8] They have 6, 4 and 3 occurrences respectively, compared with 1 for books 2, 3, and 7, and 2 for books 1 and 8.

[9] Cf. Elsner 1997.

of book 3, in the letter that Apollonius sends to the Indians to thank them for sharing their wisdom with him (3.51). Located a few paragraphs before the end of book 3, this letter closes the Indian *logos*: the book finishes with the account of Apollonius' return to Greece. Similarly, Book 4 ends with an exchange of letters between Apollonius and the Roman philosopher Musonius (4.46), again the prelude to a journey by the hero, this time to Spain. A further series of three letters from Apollonius to Vespasian (5.41), without really concluding Book 5, brings the relations between Apollonius and the emperor to a close, which leaves him free for his travel to Ethiopia, solemnly announced in 5.43. Although no letter appears at the end of book 6, his stay in Ethiopia finishes with an episode narrated partly in a letter by Apollonius (6.27). Book 7 ends with the story of an adolescent loved by Domitian; Philostratus explains that this episode is narrated by Apollonius himself in a letter (7.42). Although the letter narrates a secondary episode, which does not directly concern the life of Apollonius, it is significant that it is located at this crucial moment in the structure of the *Life*, since book 8 will present Apollonius in court, facing Domitian. The letters often appear to be used as a natural break within the narrative in order to introduce new developments. The end of book 8 offers the most striking example of this technique, as a letter from Apollonius to emperor Nerva (8.28) is used not to end the last book but also to introduce the outcome.[10]

II. Letters, Space, and Time

The letters also contribute to the composition of the text and to the spatial organization of Apollonius' adventures in shorter sequences, especially during his travels around Greece in book 4. For in various episodes, letters inform the relationship of Apollonius with a person or city, as they include moral or political judgements, and establish a proximity or distance in the relationship, reflected in the character's movements. The letter of Apollonius to the Athenians (4.22) is emblematic in this respect. Apollonius' stay in Athens had begun constructively, but things take a turn for the worse and Apollonius criticizes the pantomimes which the Athenians attend, as well as gladiator shows, in a reproachful letter which is immediately followed by a formal conclusion about Apollonius' stay in Athens:

[10] See below (pp. 287–289).

> τοιάδε εὗρον τὰ σπουδαιότατα τῶν φιλοσοφηθέντων Ἀθήνησιν αὐτῷ τότε.
>
> Such were the earnest subjects which I found he treated of at that time in Athens in his philosophical discourses.[11] (4.22)

Philostratus continues by stating that Apollonius next leaves for Thessaly as envoy. If Apollonius sent the letter from Thessaly, Philostratus might have cited this letter preceding the hero's departure in order to maintain a thematic continuity with the discourse and with the acts of Apollonius in Athens, though breaking the geographical continuity. Alternatively, Apollonius, refusing to address the Athenians directly, might still have been in the city.[12] This passage can be classified as what Tim Whitmarsh calls a 'paradigmatic narrative', as it does not recount the events within a time continuum, but assembles a certain number of exemplary facts and words that have a moral value,[13] while the precise chronological framework is secondary. While the letter to the Athenians thus punctuates a series of dictates and reproaches by Apollonius in Athens, it is not necessarily his last action in Athens. Sending a letter—a discourse theoretically addressed to someone absent—would in this case serve to establish an initial distance between Apollonius and the Athenians, symbolizing the increasing gap between them on the moral plane, before Apollonius' final departure materializes it definitively.[14]

In this episode, the epistolary message thus coincides with the hero's reproaches and departure, as well as with temporal blurring; this combination is not unique in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Indeed, a variation on this theme can be found in a passage in which Apollonius encounters Spartan ambassadors (4.27):

> (1) ἐνέτυχον Λακεδαιμονίων πρέσβεις ὑπὲρ ξυνουσίας, (2) Λακωνικὸν δὲ οὐδὲν περὶ αὐτοὺς ἐφαίνετο, ἀλλ' ἁβρότερον αὐτῶν εἶχον καὶ συβάριδος μεστοὶ ἦσαν. ἰδὼν δὲ ἄνδρας λείους τὰ σκέλη λιπαροὺς τὰς κόμας καὶ μηδὲ γενείοις χρωμένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἐσθῆτα μαλακούς, (3) τοιαῦτα πρὸς τοὺς ἐφόρους ἐπέστειλεν, ὡς ἐκείνους κήρυγμα ποιήσασθαι δημοσίᾳ τήν τε πίτταν τῶν βαλανείων ἐξαιροῦντας καὶ τὰς παρατιλτρίας ἐξελαύνοντας ἐς τὸ ἀρχαῖόν τε καθισταμένους πάντα, (4) ὅθεν παλαῖστραί τε ἀνήβησαν καὶ σπουδαὶ καὶ τὰ φιλίτια ἐπανῆλθε καὶ ἐγένετο ἡ Λακεδαίμων

11 Translations of *VA* are from Conybeare 1912, adapted.

12 Similarly, when he reads the Roman names in the decree of the Ionians inviting them to Smyrna, he sends a letter to the council to reproach them with this "barbarism" (4.5), even though he is residing in the city.

13 Cf. Whitmarsh 2007: 418–422.

14 Apollonius returns to Athens to be initiated in 5.19: but this fact is evoked in a single phrase by Philostratus who, however, had announced it (through the mouth of his hero) on his first stay (4.18).

ἑαυτῇ ὁμοία. (5) μαθὼν δὲ αὐτοὺς τὰ οἴκοι διορθουμένους ἔπεμψεν ἐπιστολὴν ἀπ' Ὀλυμπίας βραχυτέραν τῆς Λακωνικῆς σκυτάλης ἔστι δὲ ἥδε· ''Ἀπολλώνιος ἐφόροις χαίρειν. Ἀνδρῶν μὲν τὸ μὴ ἁμαρτάνειν, γενναίων δὲ τὸ καὶ ἁμαρτάνοντας αἰσθέσθαι.'

(1) they asked him to visit their city; (2) there seemed, however, to be no appearance of Lacedaemon about them; they conducted themselves in a very effeminate manner and reeked of luxury. And seeing them to have smooth legs, and sleek hair, not even wearing beards, dressed in soft raiment, (3) he sent such a letter to the Ephors that the latter issued a public proclamation and forbade the use of pitch plasters in the baths and drove out of the city the men who professed to rejuvenate dandies, and they restored the ancient régime in every respect. (4) The consequence was that the wrestling grounds were filled once more with the youth, and the jousts and the common meals were restored, and Lacedaemon became once more like herself. (5) And when he learned that they had set their house in order, he sent them an epistle from Olympia, briefer than any cipher dispatch of Sparta; and it ran as follows: "Apollonius to the Ephors, greetings. It is the mark of men not to fall into sin, but of noble men, to recognise their errors."

It is striking that, rather than addressing the envoys directly, Apollonius replies by letter—a procedure which supposes the absence of the interlocutors—although they are present in the flesh. Once again, the letter establishes a distance from the people reprimanded. Simultaneously, Apollonius' words also abolish the spatial-temporal boundaries since his dictates are put into effect in the same sentence as his initial reproach is voiced.[15]

Apart from the fact that the construction of this episode conveys the hero's almost supernatural relationship to time,[16] it also illustrates the complexity of the relations between the letters in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* and the Apollonian epistolary tradition. In the Spartan episode, the temporal and thematic proximity of the two letters suggests that Philostratus found them at the same time, perhaps juxtaposed in a collection, and that he bridges the intermediate gap by establishing a causal link between them (4) in a narrative form. Perhaps Philostratus is adhering to the memory of the original organization of the letters and integrating them into a chronological continuum by putting them into context; but why did he not *quote*

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[15] On absence or separation as the primary motivation for letter-writing and thus a frequent motif of epistolary literature see further in this volume the Introduction (pp. 11–14) and discussions by Slater (p. 212), Repath (p. 237), Hodkinson (p. 332), and McLarty (p. 377). For Philostratus' subversion of this motif here, using a letter to create distance where there is none to necessitate its writing, cf. Hodkinson 2007a.

[16] Inversely, in 7.10, while "Domitian was writing a letter to the governor of Asia, for the arrest and the summons of Apollonius", the latter is already on his way to Rome.

them both? It should be noted that the second (5) corresponds to *Letter* 42a by Apollonius,[17] whilst the first (3) has a vague relationship with *Letter* 64, which highlights the role which Apollonius plays as legislator in Sparta, similar to the one he plays in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* through the dictates which the first letter contains. *Letters* 62 and 63 are also linked to the Lacedaemonian episode, the former evoking an honorific decree in honour of Apollonius, the latter containing a reproach by Apollonius addressed to Sparta for the unvirile attitude of its envoys. The latter reflects the statement expressed by Apollonius in front of the envoys in the *Life* (2), while the decree corresponds somewhat to the invitation that opens the episode in Philostratus (1). One might argue that the *Letters* were used as a matrix for Philostratus' text. Perhaps he brought together letters partly separated, whether to quote them, summarise them, or to give them a specifically narrative form. Alternatively, Philostratus' text might pre-date the writing of the *Letters*, which, in the case of *Letters* 62, 63 and 64, would then have a narrative origin.[18]

III. Letters and the *Letters of Apollonius*

The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* takes the form of a biography,[19] even if the work is also hagiographical in nature[20]–and is hence a narrative text, relying on textual continuity, globally organized in chronological order.[21] Nevertheless, the letters are by nature discontinuous, because they are closed texts, supposedly sent originally in isolated fashion. Consequently, whether Philostratus has consulted or invented the letters he uses, their integration into the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is accompanied by a disintegration, whether of their historical or virtual framework, if these letters are primarily part of a collection existing in Philostratus' imagination.[22]

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[17] According to Bowie 1978: 1681, this letter was invented by Philostratus.

[18] *Letters* 62 and 63 are the only ones which, in certain manuscripts of the *letters*, include an inserted note, in narrative form. This is doubtlessly, as Penella (1979: 4 n. 15) argues, a note made by a copyist in an attempt to explain "the awkward juxtaposition of a letter in which the Spartiates honor Apollonius to one in which Apollonius criticizes them". But it is striking that this phenomenon occurs precisely at a moment when a complex genetic relationship between epistolary form and narrative form can be observed.

[19] Cf. Jones 2005: 3 and Gibson 2012.

[20] Cf. Van Uytfanghe 2009.

[21] Even though the biography accepts a certain chronological blurring when it comes to illustrating a moral idea: see, concerning Plutarch, Frazier 1996: 27–30.

[22] On the organisation of epistolary collections and their relevance to biographical narra-

Two series of letters, however, retain traces of organization into a collection. Just as Apollonius' *Letters* generally follow a classification by recipient (the first ten, for example, are addressed to Euphrates), thus Philostratus, in book 5, quotes three letters from Apollonius to Vespasian about his handling of Greece (5.41). These are present in part of the manuscript tradition of Apollonius' *Letters*, (42 f, g and h) and preceded by a short epistolary exchange with Musonius (42b, c, d and e), which punctuates book 4 of the *Life*. A definite pronouncement about the authenticity of these seven letters cannot be made, but it is doubtless no coincidence that the only letters from the hero to Vespasian retained in the *Letters* (42 f, g, h and 77 f, quoted in 8.7.3) are precisely those that Philostratus reproduces. Similarly, whereas, according to Philostratus, Apollonius and Musonius wrote other letters to one another, the tradition has only preserved those that the *Life* also transmits, as if the others were simply an invention on his part: the act of selection that Philostratus claims to operate makes his documentary work credible, and makes him an exemplary biographer, even though the meeting with Musonius seems to be a real "legend".[23]

Whether the juxtaposition of the four letters was retained from a collection or created by Philostratus, it is a formal choice made by the author, who imitates the structure specific to an epistolary collection within a text that is generically different. In particular, the three letters to Vespasian follow onto each other without any intervening commentary, the last two being addressed Τῷ αὐτῷ, "To the same": the expression implies the—admittedly cursory—job of editing the letters, making it possible to avoid the name of the recipient being repeated as it is the same person as in the previous letter; the same technique is found in the *Letters* of Chion of Heraclea, for example, but also in the *Love Letters* of Philostratus—even if in this case the anonymous recipients in them are probably inauthentic.[24] Was this work undertaken beforehand, in a collection consulted and copied out by Philostratus? Quoting the letters corresponds to another type of structural construct. While one letter might have explained Apollonius' attitude towards the emperor, Philostratus reproduces three, composed of cutting remarks

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tives see further the Introduction to this volume (p. 4) and Morrison (pp. 110–114, 129–131); similar questions about the arrangement of related letter collections and narratives containing letters are discussed in Whitmarsh's contribution concerning the correspondence of Alexander and the *Alexander Romance*.

[23] Penella 1979: 112; Bowie 1978: 1657.

[24] Cf. Follet 1997: 136–139. For the alteration or omission of epistolary greeting-formulae when letters are included in a collection, see further in this volume Slater (p. 212) and Hodkinson (pp. 328–329).

and becoming increasingly shorter, the third one having the distinct form of an epigram:

> Ἀπολλώνιος Οὐεσπασιανῷ βασιλεῖ χαίρειν. Ἐδουλώσω τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ὥς φασί, καὶ πλέον μὲν οἴει τι ἔχειν Ξέρξου, λέληθας δὲ ἔλαττον ἔχων Νέρωνος· Νέρων γὰρ ἔχων αὐτὸ παρῃτήσατο. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Τῷ αὐτῷ. Διαβεβλημένος οὕτω πρὸς Ἕλληνας, ὡς δουλοῦσθαι αὐτοὺς ἐλευθέρους ὄντας τί ἐμοῦ ξυνόντος δέῃ ; ἔρρωσο.
>
> Τῷ αὐτῷ. Νέρων τοὺς Ἕλληνας παίζων ἠλευθέρωσε, σὺ δὲ αὐτοὺς σπουδάζων ἐδουλώσω. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Apollonius greets the Emperor Vespasian. You have, they say, enslaved Hellas, and you imagine you have excelled Xerxes. You are mistaken. You have only fallen below Nero. For the latter held our liberties in his hand and respected them. Farewell.
>
> To the same. You have taken such a dislike to the Hellenes, that you have enslaved them although they were free. What do you want with my company? Farewell.
>
> To the same. Nero freed the Hellenes in play, but you have enslaved them in earnest. Farewell. (5.41)

This increasing brevity suggests a deliberate construction, which powerfully concludes a specific episode by illustrating the *parrhesia* of the philosopher. The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, indeed, more than the *Letters*, whose anti-Roman bias is fairly visible,[25] depicts Apollonius as in constant contact with the emperors:[26] the freedom of expression that Apollonius shows towards them—whether or not a trait of the historical Apollonius—is more marked here, and certainly corresponds to a construction of this character by Philostratus, who attribute to the Sophists the same *parrhesia*.[27] Similarly, the exchange of letters between Apollonius and Musonius also progresses towards increasing brevity:

> Ἀπολλώνιος Μουσωνίῳ φιλοσόφῳ χαίρειν. Βούλομαι παρὰ σὲ ἀφικόμενος κοινωνῆσαί σοι λόγου καὶ στέγης, ὥς τι ὀνήσαιμί σε. εἴ γε μὴ ἀπιστεῖς, ὡς Ἡρακλῆς ποτε Θησέα ἐξ Ἅιδου ἔλυσε, γράφε, τί βούλει. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Μουσώνιος Ἀπολλωνίῳ φιλοσόφῳ χαίρειν. Ὧν μὲν ἐνενοήθης, ἀποκείσεταί σοι ἔπαινος, ἀνὴρ δὲ ὁ ὑπομείνας ἀπολογίαν καὶ ὡς οὐδὲν ἀδικεῖ δείξας ἑαυτόν. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Ἀπολλώνιος Μουσωνίῳ φιλοσόφῳ χαίρειν. Σωκράτης Ἀθηναῖος ὑπὸ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ φίλων λυθῆναι μὴ βουληθεὶς παρῆλθε μὲν ἐς δικαστήριον, ἀπέθανε δέ. ἔρρωσο.

25 Bowie 1978: 1681–1682.

26 Koskenniemi 2009: 327.

27 Thus Philostratus writes that Polemon “conversed with cities as his inferiors, emperors as not his superiors and the gods as his equals” (*Lives of the Sophists*, 535).

Μουσώνιος Ἀπολλωνίῳ φιλοσόφῳ χαίρειν. Σωκράτης ἀπέθανεν, ἐπεὶ μὴ παρεσκεύασεν ἐς ἀπολογίαν ἑαυτόν, ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπολογήσομαι. ἔρρωσο.

Apollonius greets Musonius the philosopher. I would fain came unto you, to share your conversation and lodgings, in the hope of being some use to you; unless indeed you are disinclined to believe that Heracles once relased Theseus from hell; write what you would like me to do. Farewell.

Musonius greets Apollonius the philosopher. Praise awaits you for your solicitude: but he who has strength of mind to defend himself, and has proved that he has done no wrong, is a true man. Farewell.

Apollonius greets Musonius the philosopher. Socrates of Athens because he refused to be released by his own friends, came to trial and was put to death. Farewell.

Musonius greets Apollonius the philosopher. Socrates was put to death, because he was not prepared to defend himself; but I shall defend myself. Farewell. (4.46)

Again, this suggests a strong intervention by Philostratus, not only regarding structure, but perhaps also concerning the content of the letters. This sequence is the only one in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* where Philostratus retains an epistolary structure in which the two correspondents answer each other, and this is doubtless no coincidence, considering the formality of the expressions of greeting which begin and end these letters. However, as Niall Slater notes earlier in this volume, it is uncommon in literature to find letters replying to one another other side by side. Consequently, this presentation by Philostratus of the correspondence between two philosophers highlights the fact that their communication through letters is a substitute for a dialogue abandoned at the request of Musonius, in order to avoid risks: therefore they "conversed by letter" (ἐπιστολιμαίους … ξυνουσίας). Whereas the letter from Apollonius to the Lacedaemonians reflected his refusal to have a συνουσία with them, this time the letters are a means of abolishing distance and, according to a traditional definition of the letter, represent a "discussion with someone absent". That the letters follow upon each other is also a way to imitate the dialogue which should have been established, each letter representing the reply of each interlocutor. The Socratic background of this episode—Musonius being called the "Roman Socrates", the visits in prison of Damis and Menippus recalling those of Socrates' disciples before his execution evoked in the *Phaedo*, the letters themselves referring to Socrates—confirms that the letters constitute a philosophical dialogue.[28]

[28] See Miles 2009: 152, on the function of dialogue concerning another passage in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

IV. Letters and Orality[29]

While the oral dimension specific to dialogue is missing, it is paradoxically present in a certain number of letters, which highlights that Apollonius' oral and written teachings are complementary. Indeed, after recounting a conversation between Apollonius and a Parthian king (1.32), Philostratus adds that:

> Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ ἐπιστολὴν αὐτὰ πεποίηται, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἄλλα τῶν ἑαυτῷ ἐς διάλεξιν εἰρημένων ἐς ἐπιστολὰς ἀνετυπώσατο.
>
> Apollonius composed a letter containing them, and has sketched out in his epistles much else of what he said in conversation.

This suggests that the letter was the natural receptacle for Apollonius' spoken word. Similarly, Apollonius "incorporated in a letter" a witty remark *pronounced* by him in front of the imperial tribunal (7.31):

> προσεστὼς δὲ τοῖς βασιλείοις καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεραπευομένους ὁρῶν, τοὺς δὲ θεραπεύοντας, ἐσιόντων τε καὶ ἐξιόντων κτύπον, "δοκεῖ μοι, ἔφη, ὦ Δάμι, βαλανείῳ ταῦτα εἰκάσθαι, τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἔξω ἔσω ὁρῶ σπεύδοντας, τοὺς δὲ ἔσω ἔξω, παραπλήσιοι δέ εἰσιν οἱ μὲν ἐκλελουμένοις, οἱ δ' ἀλούτοις." *τὸν λόγον τοῦτον* ἄσυλον κελεύω φυλάττειν καὶ μὴ τῷ δεῖνι ἢ τῷ δεῖνι προσγράφειν αὐτὸν οὕτω τι Ἀπολλωνίου ὄντα, ὡς καὶ ἐς ἐπιστολὴν αὐτῷ ἀναγεγράφθαι.
>
> When he halted at the Palace and beheld the throng of those who were either being courted or were courting their superiors, and heard the din of those who were passing in and out, he remarked: "It seems to me, Damis, that this place resembles a bath: I see people outside hastening in, and those within, hastening out; and some of them resemble people who have been thoroughly washed, and others those who have not been washed at all." *This saying* is the inviolable property of Apollonius, (…) it is so thoroughly and genuinely his, that he repeated it in a letter.

Philostratus quotes not the letter, which is only mentioned, but the words spoken by Apollonius. The letter proves that the words are Apollonius', but only their dramatization, in a narrative form, makes it possible to highlight the moral message. Putting the sage's exemplary words into the limelight is a rhetorical procedure theorized by rhetoricians as *chreia*.[30] This rhetorical exercise involves the brief theatricalization of a word or a gesture with an exemplary value, and this practice is exploited several times in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. In certain cases, the epistolary form then becomes

[29] On epistolarity and orality see further in this volume Bowie (pp. 80–82), Gera (pp. 86–87), and Olson (pp. 359–360).

[30] On the relationship between certain letters and the *chreia*, see Stirewalt 1993: 42–64.

totally secondary. Or rather, Philostratus (re)inserts the letter into an oral communication to which the letter is foreign by its nature. One example is Apollonius' criticism of Dio Chrysostom's philosophy as "too rhetorical" (5.40):

> διορθούμενος αὐτόν *φησιν* · "αὐλῷ καὶ λύρᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ λόγῳ θέλγε." καὶ πολλαχοῦ τῶν πρὸς Δίωνα ἐπιστολῶν ἐπιπλήττει τῇ δημαγωγίᾳ ταύτῃ.
>
> He *said* to him by way of correction: "Use a pipe and a lyre, if you want to tickle men's senses, not a speech." Often in his letters to Dion he censures his use of words to captivate the crowd.

If reproach was regularly expressed in the letters of Apollonius, it is first stated independently, as if Philostratus wanted above all to quote an exemplary remark (be it written or spoken, especially since, at that moment, Apollonius is in contact with Dio in Alexandria). This situation explains Penella's argument that the quotation of a letter was *pronounced* by a character within the diegesis, for example when, in 2.26, Apollonius addresses a rebuke to Euphrates.[31] But if that is the case, it is significant that Philostratus did not indicate this borrowing from a letter, and that no marker is given to distinguish it from the oral discourse.

In two passages, the continuity established between orality and epistolary writing is emphasised through the conditions in which the letters were written and read. When Apollonius criticizes the Athenians' passion for gladiator shows, he refuses to go to the assembly on the following grounds:

> οὐκ ἂν ἔφη παρελθεῖν ἐς χωρίον ἀκάθαρτον καὶ λύθρου μεστόν. ἔλεγε δὲ ταῦτα ἐν ἐπιστολῇ καὶ θαυμάζειν ἔλεγεν ὅπως ἡ θεὸς οὐ καὶ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἤδη ἐκλείπει τοιοῦτον αἷμα ὑμῶν ἐκχεόντων αὐτῇ. δοκεῖτε γάρ μοι προιόντες, ἐπειδὰν τὰ Παναθήναια πέμπητε, μηδὲ βοῦς ἔτι, ἀλλ' ἑκατόμβας ἀνθρώπων καταθύσειν τῇ θεῷ. σὺ δέ, Διόνυσε, μετὰ τοιοῦτον αἷμα ἐς τὸ θέατρον φοιτᾷς ; κἀκεῖ σοι σπένδουσιν οἱ σοφοὶ 'Αθηναῖοι; μετάστηθι καὶ σύ, Διόνυσε· Κιθαιρὼν καθαρώτερος.
>
> He said he would not enter a place so impure and reeking with gore. And this he said in an letter; he said that he was surprised "that the goddess had not already quitted the Acropolis, when you shed such blood under her eyes. For I suspect that presently, when you celebrate the Panathenaea, you will no longer be content with bull, but will be sacrificing human hecatombs to the goddess. And you, Dionysus, do you after such bloodshed frequent their theater? And do the wise Athenians pour libations to you there? Leave, Dionysus. Cithaeron is purer." (4.22)

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[31] "When he was rebuking Euphrates for not being a philosopher, he said: 'But let us at least respect the Indian Phraotes'"; see also 4.24, with the remarks by Penella 1979: 138–139.

Apollonius' rebuke is expressed in both in indirect speech and direct speech, indicated by the use of the pronoun ὑμῶν in the middle of the sentence. Although the rebuke is presented in a letter, the reader is given the impression that he hears a *speech* by Apollonius (introduced by three verbs meaning "say"), in particular through his address of the deity, rhetorical questions and imperatives. Apollonius again uses rhetorical procedures that give the letter a highly oral character in order to accentuate the impact of the *psogos*, while establishing a distance from a depraved population.

In book 1, the equivalence between oral and written communication is highlighted through a letter in a *situation* of orality. During a five-year period of silence, Apollonius intervenes at the assembly of Aspendus, which is being threatened with famine (1.15); as he cannot speak, he writes a message that he gives to the archon of the city to read aloud. Admittedly, Philostratus uses γραμματεῖον, an ambiguous term. As he is at the assembly, a γραμματεῖον or "writing board" on which he writes his speech, can also mean an administrative document, lending the philosopher's words an official character and justifying the oral pronouncement of a text, rendering Apollonius a kind of legislator (as in 4.27). The writing board launches an "indictment" of the dealers who have hidden the grain. But certain letters also have this function[32] and we note that the message written by Apollonius begins with an epistolary form of address ("Apollonius to the corn merchants of Aspendus"). The situation reveals a close correlation between letter and speech, even more so as Apollonius plays a role similar to that of Pancrates, who quieted the Athenians with his words when they threatened Lollianos with death (*Lives of the Sophists*, 526).

V. Letters and Enunciation

Moving from letter to dialogue is the consequence of a more general phenomenon, which is the insertion of the letters into a narrative framework that is, by definition, free to accommodate voices that are not only diverse (those of the different characters), but on different narrative levels (the narrator, his possible sources, the characters, etc.) and in varied textual forms, sometimes entangled. Reproducing the letters of Apollonius paradoxically results in the muffling of Apollonius' voice, or even in the questioning of his authority, while Philostratus himself undermines the foundations of his use of his hero's letters in order to assert his own presence better.

[32] 3.38 (the text is corrected); 4.31; 5.40; 6.38.

Allowing the voice of Apollonius to be heard presupposes that his letters were effectively written by the sage, a question that has implications concerning the truth of the information which the author derives from them. Philostratus only addresses the issue of authenticity rather late, when identifying a forged letter (ἐπιστολὴν ἀνέπλασαν, 7.35) in which Apollonius begs Domitian to release him. Philostratus uses stylistic and linguistic analysis to prove the trickery intended to belittle his hero. On the one hand, the length of the letter (τὸ μῆκος, μακρηγορίαν) contrasts with the Lacedaemonian brevity of Apollonius' letters. On the other hand, the letter is in Ionian (ἰωνικῶς), a dialect that Apollonius never uses in his correspondence. These two remarks, almost "scientific" in nature, are founded, according to Philostratus, on his consultation of numerous letters (ξυνειλοχὼς ... πλείστας), which provides the biographer with the authority of an expert, justifying both his rejection of this letter and his use of others, implicitly recognised as authentic.

However, Philostratus does not quote this letter, denying the reader the right to consider for himself the authenticity of a letter inconsistent with the image of the philosopher who remains impassive when faced with Domitian. This omission is not an isolated case: when Apollonius sends a letter to the Ionians to reprimand them for the presence of Roman names in the text of the decree inviting him to the pan-Ionian ceremonies, Philostratus says that "his letter on the subject shows how severely he rebuked them" (ὡς μὲν οὖν ἐρρωμένως ἐπέπληξε, δηλοῖ ἡ περὶ τούτου ἐπιστολή), but there is no quotation to support this stylistic and moral judgement (4.5). This is a trifling omission, but reveals one of Philostratus' more general practices. While he mentions Apollonius' letters thirty-two times in the *Life*, in eight cases, he just briefly alludes to Apollonius' correspondence;[33] ten letters are quoted in their entirety[34] and three partially.[35] This is a high proportion compared, for example, with historiography, whether Greek or Latin.[36] However, any quotations are usually short,[37] the two longest being no more than seven lines

[33] Either his letters in general (1.2; 1.32; 8.20), or his correspondence with particular characters (Musonius: 4.46; Euphrates: 5.39; Dio: 5.40; Nerva, Orphitus and Rufus: 7.8; the emperors: 8.7.36).

[34] 2.40; 3.51; 4.27; 4.46 (two letters of Apollonius); 5.41 (three letters); 6.29; 6.33.

[35] 1.7; 1.24; 4.22.

[36] Delarue 2002: 128 notes the almost total absence of letters quoted in direct speeech by the Latin historians, with the notable exception of Sallust. Concerning Herodotus and Xenophon, see the contributions of Bowie and Gera in this volume. Flavius Josephus is a particular case, with over 300 letters in his work (cf. Olson 2010: 21–22).

[37] On average, they are less than four lines long.

long.[38] This brevity corresponds to Apollonius' laconic style also found in a number of *Letters* preserved outside the *Life*. But these also include longer extracts which Philostratus never retranscribes. While he never hesitates to reproduce—or rather, rewrite—Apollonius' words, the letters reveal a preference for summary or paraphrase rather than direct speech. Admittedly, indirect speech is a common way of quoting letters in historiographical and biographical texts—though this does not exclude narrative strategy.[39] Generally, however, they never exactly reflect the words actually pronounced or, in this case, written: if a letter is addressed to an "insolent young man" (6.27), does that mean that Apollonius used this expression to refer to the recipient of the letter? This is the only instance in the *Life* and the *Letters* that a recipient is addressed through ethical characterization: this seems to impose itself on Philostratus from the content of the letter, intended to "sober up" the μειράκιον who was no doubt called by his name in the original letter. The literal content of the letter can hence not be restored from the indirect speech, as this is a fragile narrative mode, which, far from reflecting the supposedly original text, can only deform it, thus increasing the problem of the authenticity of these letters.

As if to accentuate this ambiguity concerning the content of the letters, Philostratus multiplies his enunciative, structural and generic blurring effects, thereby increasing the distancing inherent in indirect speech. When he recounts the dialogue between Apollonius and Vardanes, he explains that "This is the *conversation* that *Damis says* the Master had" (ταῦτα ὁ Δάμις μὲν διαλεχθῆναί φησι τὸν ἄνδρα) (1.32); the account of the Babylonian is apparently used as a source for this episode by Philostratus. But, as we have seen, Apollonius made this conversation the subject of a letter, which is not quoted: is this his way of proving the reality of these conversations from letters that he supposes that his readers know, or for him to testify to the truth of Damis' words and, as an indirect consequence, of his own? Which text ultimately inspired him to recount the words of the sage?

The letter in which Apollonius recounts his stay with the Eretrians exiled in Babylonia (1.23–24) illustrates the intentional complexity of Philostratus' quotation procedures and their implications.[40] Here, the juxtaposition and embedding of different narrative instances create a veritable cacophony on the narratological and generic planes, from which, in the last resort, the unifying voice of Philostratus emerges.

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[38] 3.51 (complete letter) and 4.22 (partial quotation).
[39] Delarue 2002: 129.
[40] Concerning this episode, see Jones 2001; Kasprzyk 2010.

In this sequence, Apollonius' letter is mentioned or quoted at the beginning and at the end, which may suggest that the intervening developments were part of it. Indeed the letter has documentary value for Philostratus, since Apollonius writes "what he had seen and what he had done" (ἅ τε εἶδεν ἅ τε ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἔπραξεν) for the Eretrians. Its enunciation, however, is completely dispersed, making identification problematic. At first, Apollonius' words are quoted in indirect speech (αὐτὸς ὡμολόγηκεν), but Damis may intervene as sole narrator (ὁ Δάμις φησι) or associated with Apollonius (φασι). Besides, an ethno-geographical speech is taken over by a neutral narrative instance; but it is similar to the information which, in the main narrative, opens the account of Apollonius' stay in such and such a region (India, Persia, Ethiopia) on several occasions, and thus recalls the presence of Philostratus as a narrator assuming a "Herodotean" *persona*.[41] Moreover the passage is probably the rewriting of a declamation of Scopelian—probably by Philostratus[42]–the letter thus serving as an alibi, placed at two strategic places to make Apollonius' stay in Cissia credible. Philostratus' undertaking of this enunciative dislocation reflects the way in which the letter was forged, with the help of heterogeneous material. A letter from Apollonius to Scopelian preserved in the *Letters*,[43] albeit unrelated to the story recounted here, may have inspired the idea of a letter, the content of which was provided by Herodotus (6.119), perhaps through the intermediary of Scopelian; a funerary epigram cited by Philostratus is in the *Greek Anthology* (7.246, attributed to Plato), and the geographical imprecision[44] betrays the apocryphal character of this epitaph. The enunciative blurring, along with a generic blurring—somewhere between letter, narrative, elegy, and *melete*–enables Philostratus to superimpose his voice on that of the different narrators, before imposing itself definitively: the immediate conclusion of the letter is followed by a more detailed account of Apollonius asking Vardanes to intervene in favour of the Eretrians (1.36).

This blurring takes a rather different form in two passages where Philostratus indicates only at the last moment that the story he is recounting can also be found in one of Apollonius' letters. These are letters intended to *narrate* something, the task of narrative elaboration taken over by Philostratus, as if he had exclusive rights to it, and only letting the epistolary voice of

41 Concerning the "Herodotean voice" of Philostratus, see Whitmarsh 2004: 425–426.
42 See Penella 1974.
43 *Letter* 19, which concerns eloquence.
44 Ecbatana is in fact located hundreds of kilometres from Cissia.

Apollonius be heard through brief sentences with an essentially moral message. In the following two cases, however, the figure of the epistolographic Apollonius is transformed by an irreverent inversion of Philostratus, a narrator who, in a way, adopts the *persona* of his hero, with the sage, who is partly deprived of his authority. At 7.42 Philostratus tells the story of an adolescent loved by Domitian who is ready to die in order to defend his virtue. Philostratus explains to begin with, that "what follows is related by Damis, he says, from accounts given by Apollonius, both to himself and Demetrius" (Τὰ ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀναγράφει Δάμις ἐξ ὧν Ἀπολλωνίου φησὶν ἀκηκοέναι πρὸς Δημήτριόν τε καὶ πρὸς αὑτὸν εἰπόντος). The account is thus initially endowed with a dual embedded narrative, but it is progressively taken over by Philostratus, who addresses the external readers in the first person ("*we* should not praise him …"). Consequently, the following dialogue between Apollonius and the adolescent appears as a rewriting of the episode by Philostratus, using Damis' narrative of the account that Apollonius made to him afterwards. It ends with laconic praise of the young man by Apollonius, "A true Arcadian, I see"– an expression which seems to put an end to the episode. Consequently, the mention of a letter by Apollonius on this subject is a surprise:

> καὶ μὴν τοῦ μειρακίου τούτου καὶ ἐν ἐπιστολῇ μέμνηται … σωφροσύνης τε ἐπαινῶν πρὸς ὃν γράφει φησὶ τὸ μειράκιον τοῦτο μηδ' ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ τυράννου, θαυμασθὲν δὲ τῆς ῥώμης ἐπὶ Μαλέαν πλεῦσαι ζηλωτὸν τοῖς ἐν Ἀρκαδίᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ τὰς τῶν μαστίγων καρτερήσεις παρὰ Λακεδαιμονίοις νικῶντες.
>
> Moreover, he mentions this youth in one letter (…), and while praising him for his modesty to his correspondent, adds that he was not killed by the tyrant, but after exciting admiration by his firmness, he returned by ship to Malea, and was held in more honor by the Arcadians than the youths who among the Lacedaemonians surpass their fellows in their endurance of the scourge. (7.42)

The information explicitly attributed to the letter constitutes a kind of appendix, and it is no coincidence that Philostratus does not take it over in his own name: by concluding the dialogue with a judgement of an ethical nature, he was omitting the future fate of the young man in order to concentrate on the more general problem of the attitude to adopt faced with the tyrant. By initially leaving the young man's fate in suspense, through the narrative structure he imitates the attitude of absolute detachment faced with death, characteristic of Apollonius. This effect of suspension was already seen in the exchange of letters between Apollonius and Musonius at the end of book 4. Situated at a crucial moment, since Musonius is on the point of being judged, their correspondence ends with the Roman's decision to defend himself at his trial, the outcome of which we do not know

immediately, whereas death is omnipresent in their letters, especially via Theseus and, above all, Socrates. In this way, the letters, first cited in a precise context, assume a universal value which exceeds the particular case of Musonius. It is only incidentally that the reader learns, in book 5, that Musonius is still alive, condemned to help build the Isthmus of Corinth (5.19). Hence integrating the letters into the narrative has a philosophical signification, conferring on Philostratus the *persona* of a philosopher-narrator, in agreement with his subject.

Philostratus gives a rather curious indication concerning the letter about the Arcadian boy: he considers that Apollonius "describes him much more charmingly than I do here," (διαγράφει αὐτὸ πολλῷ ἥδιον ἢ ἐγὼ ἐνταῦθα). It is by means of dialogue that, just beforehand, Philostratus sketches the physical portrait of the adolescent:

> εἰπέ μοι, ἔφη, μειράκιον, μὴ γλαυκὸν ἡγεῖταί σε ὁ βασιλεὺς καίτοι μελανόφθαλμον, ὡς ὁρῶ, ὄντα, ἢ στρεβλὸν τὴν ῥῖνα καίτοι τετραγώνως ἔχοντα, καθάπερ τῶν ἑρμῶν οἱ γεγυμνασμένοι, ἢ τὴν κόμην ἕτερόν τι παρ' ὅ ἐστιν; ἔστι δ', οἶμαι, ἡλιῶσά τε καὶ ὑποφαίνουσα, καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ στόμα οὕτω ξύμμετρον, ὡς καὶ σιωπῇ πρέπειν καὶ λόγῳ, δέρη τε οὕτως ἐλευθέρα καὶ φρονοῦσα. τί οὖν ἕτερον τούτων ὁ βασιλεὺς ἡγήσεταί σε, ἐπειδὴ κακῶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ λέγεις ὀφθῆναι;

> Tell me, boy, surely the Emperor does not imagine you have blue eyes, when you have, as I see, black ones? Or that you have a crooked nose, whereas it is square and regular, like that of a well executed Hermes? or has he not made some mistake about your hair? For, methinks, it is sunny and gleaming, and your mouth too is so regular, that whether you are silent or talking, it is equally comely, and you carry your head freely and proudly. Surely the Emperor must be mistaking all these traits for others, or you would not tell me he has cast an evil eye on you. (7.42)

This summary description, inserted into a philosophical dialogue, is endowed with a moral function: beauty is the touchstone of wisdom. This conception, however, is transported by a part of the text taken over by Philostratus, whereas the letter of Apollonius is characterized by "pleasure": does Philostratus want us to understand that it contained a veritable *ecphrasis*[45] designed to provide pleasure? We thus observe an ethical inversion between Apollonius and Philostratus: while the sage turns sophist (in a letter that, for this reason perhaps, Philostratus does not quote *verbatim*), Philostratus

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[45] In the *Lives of the Sophists* (552ff.), Philostratus bases himself on a letter by Herodes Atticus to tell the story of "the being whom most men used to call the Heracles of Herodes". This letter begins with a description of the character of which there is no equivalent in the other Sophists' *Lives*.

adopts a moral position which definitely distinguishes him from the narrator of the *Imagines*, but also of the *Love Letters*, which include descriptions of adolescents in a much more frivolous context and where, in particular, an apology for prostitution (cf. *Love Letters* 19 and 38) is to be found.

In another letter dedicated to a particular episode, when Apollonius captures a satyr in a village in Ethiopia (6.27), Philostratus adopts an inverse attitude. It is only after narrating the episode that he indicates that it also appears in

> ἐπιστολῇ τοῦ ἀνδρός, ἣν πρὸς μειράκιον ὑβρίζον γράφων καὶ σάτυρον δαίμονα σωφρονίσαι φησὶν ἐν Αἰθιοπίᾳ
>
> the sage's epistle, in which he wrote to an insolent young man that he had sobered up even a satyr demon in Ethiopia.

As the verb ὑβρίζειν is also used to characterize the satyr, we observe a topical opposition between σωφροσύνη and ὕβρις, which suggests that the letter had a moral function: through an *exemplum* taken from his own experience, Apollonius certainly intended σωφρονίσαι the young man too, but the construction of the account by Philostratus lends it a different function and meaning.

First we note the elaborate dramatization. The satyr, not yet identified as such,[46] appears dramatically in the middle of Apollonius' evening meal, and then again in the hunt undertaken by the inhabitants of the village. An analepsis then indicates that the satyr's actions have been going on for some time, and that he has already attacked four victims, all women lusted after by the creature (6.27.1). Fear, mystery, sex and blood naturally constitute a fanciful cocktail.[47] Apollonius then identifies the aggressor, before explaining how they can catch it (6.27.2): the insertion of the fable of Midas reminds us that, for pseudo-Libanius (*Epistolimaioi charakteres*, 50), ἱστορίαι and μῦθοι "bring charm to the letters". The action—but not the narration—ends with the capture of the sleeping satyr, a peaceful end which contrasts with the initial hectic pursuit (6.27.3). This dramatization is the act of a storyteller preoccupied with his effects: if Apollonius is later cited as the author of a letter on this subject, it emphasises that the narrative and dramatic organization of the episode is due to Philostratus.

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46 The villagers incite each other to "join in the pursuit and catch [the thing]": ἑλεῖν and διῶξαι (a *hysteron proteron*) have no complements.

47 Bowie 1994: 189–193 recalls a certain number of characteristics common to the *Life* and the novel, but emphasizes the systematically negative character of the *eros* in the work of Philostratus.

VI. Letters and Authority

The art of Philostratus can be further seen in the reduplication of the stories within this sequence. Apollonius explains that a remedy exists against these creatures through the story of Midas (6.27.2),[48] the capture of the satyr showing that "the story is true" (μὴ ψεύδεται ὁ λόγος). In the epilogue and symmetrically, just after indicating the existence of the letter (6.27.4), Philostratus in turn tells a story of a satyr, taken over by the biographer as indicated by οἶδα or the use of the (present) tense in the narrative.[49] This personal anecdote is not gratuitous: Philostratus uses it to prove the reality of satyrs and their concupiscence and invites his readers not to be incredulous (μὴ ἀπιστῶμεν).

Apollonius' letter is integrated into a more global reasoning: a fact located in an undatable past (Midas and the satyr) is proved by a fact contemporary with Apollonius (the satyr of Ethiopia), that will be confirmed more generally by a fact contemporary with Philostratus (the satyr of Lemnos). By using the same type of reasoning as Apollonius, Philostratus ensure the validity of his demonstration, and also imposes himself as a master of truth "on these questions" (ὑπὲρ τούτων) and ends this sequence with the idea that we should not be incredulous (ἀπιστεῖν) in the face of experience nor towards him (ἐγώ, the last word in the sentence). Apollonius' letter seems to play a secondary role: "*If one reads* the sage's epistle [...] he would keep this *logos* in mind". Philostratus draws the reader's attention to the story of the satyr, independent of its moral value, before proving its authenticity, which is therefore not guaranteed by the simple fact that Apollonius speaks of it in a letter. The content of the letters thus needs to be proved or verified, a paradoxical attitude since, as Philostratus says on the subject of Apollonius' letters and words, the latter tells only the truth (4.26).

Of course, even if, in another passage, the main narrator says that "there would be some profit in neither believing nor disbelieving" (3.45), the call for πίστις, the refusal to ψεύδεσθαι, and such word as ἀπιστεῖν[50] are all implicit markers of fictionality in numerous texts of the Imperial era, so that

[48] Apollonius transforms the traditional identity of this king, about whom it is generally said that Apollo gave him ears in order to punish him for his musical ignorance. This reformulation of mythological data recalls what Philostratus engages in, in another of his works: the *Heroicus*. Behind the voice of Apollonius we hear the voice of Philostratus the storyteller and mythographer, who also attributes to Apollonius a certain number of reflections on the content and meaning of the myth (for example, in 5.15, concerning Enceladus; see Gyselinck and Demoen 2009: 119–125 on this point).

[49] See Whitmarsh 2007: 414.

[50] Cf. Gyselinck and Demoen 2009: 118–119, and 108–114 on the theme of belief.

Philostratus' claim questions in fact the authority of Apollonius' speech and at the same time strengthens his own. This is the case concerning a letter by Apollonius to the Indians, dedicated to the western confines of the known world and addressed to the inhabitants of the eastern confines (5.2)–the letter again being a means to cross through space. Whereas, in the treaty *On Style*, Demetrius writes that dissertations on the "natural sciences" (φυσιολογίαι) do not constitute "epistolary subjects" (πράγματα ἐπιστολικά), Apollonius did not hesitate to tackle scientific questions in his correspondence, thus following fairly common practice.[51] Now Philostratus maintains that he too observed the tides at Gadeira (καὶ αὐτὸς εἶδον): although he *assumes* (δοκῶ μοι) that Apollonius discerned the real truth (τὸ ὄν) about the causes of the tides in a letter, he comes to this conclusion only after making various conjectures (εἰκάζων) of his own. Philostratus not only does not accept Apollonius' scientific discourse unconditionally, but he adds a series of personal observations, whose goal is to confirm (πιστοῦται) Apollonius' theory. As in book 6, the accuracy of the letter's content is confirmed by wider scientific reasoning. Philostratus' discourse is based on that of Apollonius which, in its turn, is validated by Philostratus' discourse: this reciprocity ensures the authority of the two speakers simultaneously, and their voices are thus to some extent homogenized. But the rapid development about the moon, which closes this sequence, is taken over entirely by Philostratus, who recounts what *he* knows (οἶδα).

VII. Letters and Dramatic Manipulation

The letters are therefore the object of textual manipulations by the narrator, whether by quoting the (supposedly) original text (or not), summarizing it, merging it into a body of heterogeneous voices and genres, (de)constructing it, and integrating it into his broader narrative. To the *narrative* manipulation of the letters as texts corresponds their manipulation as objects on the *dramatic* plane: the way in which the characters write, send, read a letter (or not) is sometimes the object of theatricalization which lends meaning to the epistolary practice by defining the relationships between characters, especially sovereigns and philosophers, via their correspondence.

Apollonius' letters often have a political and moral tone, since they are used, as Philostratus states, to "correct" individuals and cities on different questions (cf. 1.2), rebuke them for their behaviour, and encourage them in

[51] Cugusi 1983: 123–126.

their search for virtue and the good, particularly politically. However, these letters do not only have a moral content: the circumstances in which they are used also convey a message, by a sort of *mise en abyme*. Since the famous episode in *Iliad* 6, the letter is as much valued for its content as for the way it is written, transmitted and read, which influences the action, sometimes decisively: at the time of Philostratus, the Greek novels continue to exploit this aspect.[52] While Apollonius' letters have a selective dramatic function, their manipulation provides them, above all, with symbolic significance in the system of values personified by Apollonius.

In 5.38, Vespasian invites Apollonius, Dio and Euphrates to ask him for gifts. Euphrates is the only one to use a letter containing his request, which suggests that this procedure is abnormal. The pluperfect–"(he) had composed (ξυνετέκτατο) a letter"–indicates a calculation on his part: before even indicating the content of the letter, the narrator reveals that Euphrates has already thought about the presents that he will ask for; through the structure of the episode, he invites us to make a first judgement about an attitude unworthy of a philosopher. Philostratus adds a detail that increases our suspicions: Euphrates hopes that Vespasian will read the letter "privately", καθ' ἑαυτόν,[53] as if he had something to hide. Since a letter normally allows one to make contact with someone absent, there is no reason for a letter here. But the attitude of Vespasian reminds us that having recourse to a letter is never without danger for the sender; in Philostratus' *Life*, this essential aspect of literary epistolarity is almost absent, and in the present case, it is a watered-down version of the many anecdotes in which a letter threatens the existence of a character, often the carrier of the letter.[54] Indeed, Vespasian, in his turn, manipulates the epistolary relationship expected by the sender, by reading the letter "openly" (δημοσίᾳ), "to expose him to criticism" (παραδοῦναί τινα κατ' αὐτοῦ λόγον). Euphrates is thus caught in his own trap, and it is only when this game is theatricalized by Philostratus that the content of his letter is summarised:

> αἰτῶν δὲ ἐφαίνετο τὰ μὲν ἑαυτῷ, τὰ δὲ ἑτέροις, καὶ τῶν δωρεῶν αἱ μὲν χρήματα ἦσαν, αἱ δὲ ὑπὲρ χρημάτων.
>
> He turned out to be making some requests for himself, others for other people, and some of the gifts involved money, other the equivalent of money.

52 See the chapter by Repath in this volume; on letters within narrative as *mise en abyme* (p. 262).

53 About this expression, see Robiano 2004 who, with reason, rejects the idea of a "silent" reading for this passage.

54 See Rosenmeyer 2001: 50–55.

In itself, this summary would have sufficed to unmask the false philosopher, attached to worldly wealth; the contextualization, namely writing it and reading it, adds meaning, by emphasizing Euphrates' duplicity. Moreover, Apollonius' final comment[55] increases the denunciation of this character by opposing his current attitude with the words that he pronounced in favour of democracy, when he incited Vespasian, of whom he requests so many gifts, to renounce the throne (5.33). Apart from the content of the letter, the episode has both a moral and political significance.

Even if Euphrates' attitude is belittled, letters are still represented as an ordinary means of requesting a favour, particularly from a man in power. Credentials in particular play an essential role in sociability among the elite in the Imperial period, as testified especially by the correspondence of Pliny the Younger or Fronto,[56] and we encounter several examples of these in the *Life*.[57] Their theatricalization, however, underlines that this highly codified epistolary form loses all value from Apollonius' point of view, highlighting the hero's eccentricity, or rather the way he frees himself from social norms that are not necessarily compatible with his philosophical ideals.

The function of these letters is to facilitate Apollonius' travel in distant lands; thus the Indian king Phraotes, at the moment when Apollonius is getting ready to go and visit the gymnosophists, gives him a guide, camels and money and promises to write a letter to their chief, Iarchas. First announced (2.40), then quoted in its entirety (2.41), the letter is, as it were, written in front of the external reader,[58] in a sequence that resonates with a game of opposition in an earlier scene (2.17): as Apollonius and his companions arrive on the banks of the Indus, they discover that the Babylonian supposed to guide them does not know the area. As they ask him why he has not recruited a guide, he replies that he has one and, as if by magic, takes out of his bag a letter from the Parthian king Vardanes, presented as the "one who will direct us", ὁ ἡγησόμενος. The appearance, not without humour, of

55 "Apollonius said with a laugh: 'So you gave advice in favor of democracy while asking a monarch for all this?'"

56 Rees 2007: 151 has counted over twenty *litterae commendaticiae* in Pliny and sixteen in Fronto: several of them are addressed to Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, respectively.

57 Generally, a large number of letters are sent or received by men in power. Among the recipients there are kings and emperors: e.g. Vardanes (2.17); Phraotes (2.40; 3.28—unsent letter); an unnamed emperor, no doubt Nero (4.33); Vespasian (5.31; 5.41; 6.30; 8.7.11); Titus (6.29); Domitian (7.10).

58 "He gave them a letter for Iarchas, written in the following terms: 'King Phroates greets his teacher Iarchas and his companions. Apollonius, wisest of men, yet accounts you still wiser than himself, and is come to learn your lore. Send him away therefore when he knows all that you know yourselves' …"

this *epistula ex machina* smooths out the difficulties, since the characters soon find themselves on board the governor of the Indus' ship; again, the letter has the effect of temporal smoothing. Regarding the letter of Phraotes, on the other hand, the time of writing it (2.40) and the time of reading it (3.16) are quite distinct, the reading being furthermore the object of an elaborate theatricalization. At the moment when Apollonius presents himself before Iarchas, the latter immediately asks him for the letter, even before it has been mentioned by Apollonius, and says that it contains a spelling error. This presupposes that the gymnosophist knew the content of the letter, the text of which he seems to visualize; this does not prevent him from reading it afterwards (cf. ἀναγνοὺς δὲ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ... 3.16), inverting the usual order of things. The text of the letter is obviously not re-transcribed as the reader already knows it; but as Iarchas also knows it in advance, the aesthetic requirements of Philostratus' narrative are in agreement with the highlighting of the Indian sage's prescience, within the diegesis.

While this specific letter displays the "rhetoric of praise"[59] characteristic of recommendations, it lacks any practical function since, even if the king asks the gymnosophists to reveal their wisdom to Apollonius, it is the dialogue between the hero and Iarchas that gives him this right (3.16.4). For after insisting, in Damis' words, on the necessity of obtaining all that will guarantee the good progress of their journey (2.40.2–3), the biographer suggests that these credentials, which correspond to common social practice and for which Apollonius' entourage feels the necessity, have no value in Apollonius' world, which is why Philostratus decreases their significance or reverses the social relationships that they imply. When Cicero or Pliny include these kinds of letters in their published *Correspondence*, it is to highlight the influence that they possess.[60] By contrast, Apollonius asserts in his discourse to Domitian that he never boasted about receiving letters from emperors or writing to them (8.7.11).

One episode clarifies this redefinition of credentials. When Titus asks Apollonius for advice on the art of reigning, he promises to put Titus in contact, by letter, with the philosopher Demetrius, who can advise him (6.31). The verb ξυστήσω is related to the adjective συστατική which refers to the letter of recommendation, and the expression suggests that Apollonius will recommend Demetrius to the emperor. However, the text of the letter (6.33) reverses the relationship between the two characters:

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59 This is Rees' expression. See Rees 2007: 161–164.

60 Cf. Rees 2007: 152 and 156.

> Ἀπολλώνιος φιλόσοφος Δημητρίῳ κυνὶ χαίρειν. Δίδωμί σε βασιλεῖ Τίτῳ διδάσκαλον τοῦ τῆς βασιλείας ἤθους, σὺ δ' ἀληθεῦσαί τέ μοι πρὸς αὐτὸν δίδου καὶ γίγνου αὐτῷ, πλὴν ὀργῆς, πάντα. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Apollonius the philosopher greets Demetrius the Cynic. I give you to the emperor Titus, so that you instruct him how to behave as a king, and take care that you confirm the truth of my words to him, and make yourself, anger apart, everything to him. Farewell.

Apollonius clearly subordinates political power to philosophy when he makes Demetrius the διδάσκαλος of the sovereign, another position of superiority. While relationships between Apollonius and emperors are an essential thread in the narrative and ideological structure of the *Life*,[61] the sending of a letter reverses the usual hierarchy between the emperors and the rest of humanity. This paradoxical situation is recognised by Titus, who wishes that someone could write to Apollonius on his behalf (ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ … γράφειν, 6.31) to convince him to come to Rome with him. Whereas the philosopher can do without a royal recommendation, the emperor needs to be recommended to the philosopher; but this remains a pious hope, as if noone was likely to have a great enough influence over Apollonius.

Wisdom, however, constitutes the only real recommendation, as is shown in ironic mode in an earlier episode (3.28). Visiting the Indian gymnosophists, Apollonius is insulted by a king until the hero tells him that Phraotes:

> γράφειν δὲ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ πρὸς σὲ ἐβούλετο, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἔφασκεν ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν εἶναί σε, παρῃτησάμην τὸν ὄχλον τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ ἐκείνῳ τις ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ ἐπέστειλεν.
>
> wished to write to you on my behalf, but since he said you were a good man, I begged him not to take the trouble of writing, since nobody wrote on my behalf.

Apollonius reverses the common use of credentials: while they are supposed to present the merits of the person recommended,[62] but also praise the addressee in order to make them feel well-disposed, the refusal to send a letter is founded here on the praising of its virtual recipient. However, this letter looks as if it was invented by Apollonius: it was not mentioned before, and the attitude of the king on his arrival (3.27.1), the comments by Iarchas about him (3.26.1) and the words of the king himself (3.28) betray his arrogance and lack of virtue, so much so that the supposed praise of this king by

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61 See Flintermann 1995: 128–161.
62 See Pseudo-Demetrius, *Epistolary Types* (*Tupoi epistolikoi*) 2.

Phraotes is only flattery, and therefore an invention by Apollonius. Recalling that he did not need credentials when he made contact with Phraotes, he too underlines the vanity of this kind of letter. In reality, Apollonius did arrive at Phraotes' carrying a letter written by the governor of the Indus, who had helped him (2.17). However, this letter is not used to facilitate contact with the king, because Apollonius' relationship with him is founded on shared philosophical and Hellenic ideals. Nevertheless, the governor's letter, only summarised by Philostratus, puts forward Apollonius' Greek origins and his divine nature (ἄνδρα Ἕλληνά τε καὶ θεῖον).

VIII. The Last Letter as Paradigm

One final letter must be discussed, as it synthesizes all the issues raised by Philostratus' use of the epistolary form, namely the last letter in the *Life* (8.28), sent to Nerva shortly before Apollonius' death. Placed at a strategic point in the text, addressed to an emperor at a crucial moment in Apollonius' life, it has philosophical, dramatic and narratological implications, due to its theatricalization rather than its content, which is not revealed. Nerva has written to Apollonius to ask him to be his advisor, but the sage refuses in an enigmatic letter that announces their future death: next, he changes his mind, as he does not wish to "seem to slight a good a friend and a good ruler". This information about Apollonius' intention is what Hodkinson calls "psychic omniscience", a strong indicator of fictionality in biographical texts.[63] The reflection of Apollonius is used to motivate an action that is, without a doubt, fictitious. Apollonius therefore writes a letter including advice about matters of state (τῶν ἀρχικῶν, 8.28): for the last time, Philostratus recalls the hierarchy established between Philostratus and good emperors. He asks Damis to take it to Nerva because certain secret information must be communicated orally—again the link between writing and orality. This brutal reversal[64] suggests an anomaly, which Philostratus denounces immediately afterwards in a veiled way: "Damis says he only understood Apollonius' stratagem (τῆς τέχνης) later", a ploy that involves making the

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[63] Cf. Hodkinson 2010, who notes elsewhere that Philostratus avoids this type of procedure in order to preserve the historian's distance vis-à-vis his character.

[64] A reversal that marks a return to a practice testified several times in the classical period, according to which the letter is sometimes a complement to a messenger's oral report, or inversely: cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 57 ff. concerning the letter from Nicias to the Athenians (Thucydides, 7.11).

letter an excuse (cf. ἐσκήψατο) to get Damis out of the way, so that he could not be present at Apollonius' disappearance. If Apollonius claims that he respects the duties of friendship—thus recalling that one essential function of letters is to maintain a link of friendship[65]–and claims to assume his customary function of advisor of good emperors, his letter indeed lacks its social and political function on two accounts: not only is it destined to go unheeded, since the emperor is soon going to die, but above all, it serves a higher principle, of a philosophical order.

The absence of Damis at Apollonius' death surely refers to Plato's absence at Socrates' execution, evoked at the beginning of *Phaedo*, a dialogue that the *Life* has already referred to concerning Musonius, and which is dedicated to the soul in the same way that the epilogue of the *Life* recalls the doctrine of the immortality of the soul (8.31). However, the distancing of Apollonius' disciple not only has a philosophical meaning, but it also has implications on the narratological level. As Philostratus indicates, Damis' *Memoirs* end (τελευτᾷ) with this episode, without the Assyrian having spoken about the end (ἐτελεύτα) of Apollonius:

> Τὰ μὲν δὴ ἐς Ἀπολλώνιον τὸν Τυανέα Δάμιδι τῷ Ἀσσυρίῳ ἀναγεγραμμένα ἐς τόνδε τὸν λόγον τελευτᾷ, περὶ γὰρ τρόπου, καθ' ὃν ἐτελεύτα, εἴγε ἐτελεύτα, πλείους μὲν λόγοι, Δάμιδι δὲ οὐδεὶς εἴρηται.
>
> The memoirs of Apollonius of Tyana which Damis the Assyrian composed, end with this story; for with regard to the manner of his death, if he did actually die, there are many stories, though, Damis has repeated none.

This means that Damis is eliminated simultaneously from the account and from the narrative: absent during Apollonius' final moments, he is disqualified as narrator-witness. On the other hand, Philostratus asserts that "[his] story should have its proper ending" (δεῖ γάρ που τὸν λόγον ἔχειν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πέρας). The account therefore continues, and he reviews the different versions of Apollonius' death, although he does not choose between them.[66] It ends with an episode recounted by a neutral narrative voice relating the way in which a young man was visited in a dream by Apollonius, who reveals the mysteries of the immortality of the soul to him. It is likely that, as Apollonius invents a pretext to keep Damis at a distance, Philostratus invented the episode of this letter to make Damis disappear, since his presence would have removed the fantastic element from the conclusion: we therefore have

[65] Cf. Stowers 1986: 58–60; for Demetrius, *On Style*, 231, "the letter was to be a brief testimony of friendship" (φιλοφρόνησις).

[66] Cf. Schirren 2005: 307.

a twofold manipulation, as if, in order to narrate the hero's eclipse, the biographer had to undertake the progressive eclipse of any identified narrative instance. In a way, Apollonius' attitude in the action prefigures and justifies Philostratus' attitude in the narrative.

It is no coincidence that the disappearance of Damis coincides with the final sending of a letter. It is indeed striking that, symmetrically, at the beginning of the *Life*, his entrance as a character and as a source of the account also immediately follows the first evocation of Apollonius' correspondence. It is well known that one of the main questions posed by the *Life* is that of the reality of Damis' *Memoirs* and of the very existence of Apollonius' companion.[67] Philostratus' commentators note that the way in which he introduces Damis into the account implies a strategy of *Beglaubigung*, the topical character of which reveals a kinship between the *Life* and other contemporary fictional texts. The elimination of Damis at the end of the text also, in a certain way, betrays the narratological fiction that it represents: if, in spite of his disappearance, the account can attain its *telos*, it is because Philostratus can do without him. Consequently, the association between Damis and the letters on the narratological plane brings a new dimension to the problem, perhaps a strategy on the part of Philostratus to make the *Memoirs* credible by associating them with texts whose existence is recognised by the existence of various collections.[68] As an indirect consequence, he invites the reader, from the beginning of the *Life*, to be wary of this type of apparently more trustworthy text. Whether he uses letters actually written by Apollonius, circulating under the name of Apollonius (letters that he can consider or pretend to consider as authentic), letters rewritten (like the account of Damis: cf. 1.3) or letters invented by himself, Philostratus warns his reader against manipulations that letters are open to, but he does it precisely by undertaking various formal, textual or dramatic manipulations himself, which more generally undermine the authority of the texts on which he claims to base his work.

67 Concerning "the invention of Damis", see Bowie 1978: 1663–1667.

68 In several instances, as we have seen, an episode recounted in a letter is also attributed to Damis, as if the two sources were there to mutually authenticate each other: cf. 1.23; 1.32; 7.42.

PART II

INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION IN EPISTOLARY NARRATIVES

C. *Short Stories in Epistolary Form*

LOVE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE: THE EPISTOLARY GHOST-STORY IN PHLEGON OF TRALLES

J.R. Morgan

The collection of paradoxa (often referred to as the *Mirabilia*) attributed to Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of the emperor Hadrian,[1] is preserved in a single manuscript, of which the beginning is missing.[2] It is a curious production, comprising three fairly lengthy pieces treating the supernatural at the beginning, and petering off into summary lists of persons of ambiguous gender, discoveries of giant bones, monstrous and multiple births, unusually rapid development, sightings of live centaurs, and people who lived to be a hundred. No doubt has ever been raised as to the authenticity of the collection or the validity of its attribution, but it is so disparate, in form as well as content, and so obviously, in the case of the first three items, copied verbatim from other texts that one must query whether what we have is the deliberate creation of anyone. This may be of importance in the matter of dating: if the attribution to Phlegon is correct, we are committed to a Hadrianic dating or earlier for the original composition of the lengthier pieces literally transcribed in the compilation. I shall refer to the collection noncommittally as "Phlegon".

This paper deals with the first item in the collection, a justly famous story of the supernatural, which has enjoyed a considerable *Nachleben*, in the work of Goethe, Washington Irving, Théophile Gautier, and Anatole France, to name but four.[3] It has not exactly been over-studied in modern

[1] The Suda Φ 527 calls him a freedman of the emperor Augustus, relegating the Hadrianic connection to a "some-say" alternative. He is mentioned in the *Historia Augusta* (*Hadr*. 16.1), which suggests that his works were in fact composed by the emperor; cf. also *Sept. Sev*. 20.1. The excerpt from Phlegon's *Olympiads*, preserved in the same manuscript as the *Mirabilia*, is attributed to "Phlegon the freedman of the Emperor Hadrian". For an overview of what is known about Phlegon's life and work, see Frank 1949.

[2] Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Pal.Gr.398 (ninth century). A critical edition of the text is provided by Stramaglia 2011; text also available in Stramaglia 1999: 230–257, Stramaglia 2000: 167–184, Brodersen 2002. Translations in Hansen 1996; Ogden 2002: 159–161 and Rosenmeyer 2006: 38–41 translate the epistolary piece with which this paper is concerned.

[3] Goethe, *Die Braut von Korinth* (1797); Théophile Gautier, "La morte amoureuse", a short story published in *La Chronique de Paris* (1836); Washington Irving, "Adventure of the German

scholarship, and interest has focused predominantly on what it tells us about ancient belief in ghosts, reconstruction of a putative *Urgeschichte*, and its relation to similar stories in the folklore of other cultures.[4] Little attention has been paid to its extraordinarily sophisticated narratology, its epistolary form, and the nature of its fictionality. In fact the loss of the opening of the text adds to the effects of mystery and disorientation which must always have been part of its appeal. In Genettian terms, the disjunction between *histoire* and *récit* is exaggerated by the absence of the first part of the *récit*, leaving some vital parts of the *histoire* to emerge by implication and in a radically anachronic order.[5] Our estimation of the precise effect depends on how we reconstruct the missing opening of the text and how much of the back-story it had revealed to its readers, but it is clear that anachronicity was an important property of the narrative even in its complete form.

As we shall see, "Phlegon" is not our only witness to the original form of the text, and has radically changed its meaning by incorporating it in a paradoxographical miscellany.[6] However, in the interest of surprise and suspense, I shall postpone the introduction of the second testimony, and begin by analysing our decapitated version of "Phlegon", in order to illustrate the themes and protocols of the narrative. For a modern reader, much of the text's fascination and power derives from the fragmentary condition of its narrative. It would be nice to imagine, in defiance of the evidence, that it was deliberately composed as a fragment. Nevertheless, both the narratology and the impact of our text must differ in important respects from those of the original. We are in effect dealing with two different texts, requiring different reading strategies. I begin with a sequential first reading of what we have, which springs a few more surprises than the original may have done. Readers of this chapter who might wonder what it is doing in a volume on epistolary narratives will discover the answer in due course.

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student", a short story in the collection *Tales of a Traveller, by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1860); Anatole France, "Les noces corinthiennes" a ballad published in *Les poèmes dorés: idylles et légendes* (1876).

4 Rohde 1877; Mesk 1925; Hansen 1980; Hansen 1989.

5 Although the concepts are basic, there is a bewildering lack of agreement about terminology. By '*histoire*' I mean a series of events abstracted from the text and rearranged in their chronological order; this is sometimes termed 'fabula' or 'story'. By '*récit*' I mean the events as ordered and presented in the text; this is sometimes called 'story' or 'narrative'.

6 See Morgan 1999 on this theme.

I. Reading "Phlegon"

We begin in mid-sentence:

> (1) ... into the guest-quarters, she approached the door, and the lamp being lit, saw the (female) person (τὴν ἄνθρωπον) sitting beside Machates.[7]

This looks like a technically unremarkable narration by a third-person external narrator. The woman looking through the door[8] is identified for us as "the nurse" in § 4, and Machates is called "the guest" in § 2; we can assume that the original readers already knew who these people are. The focalised presentation of the scene inside the room suggests that *the* (not "a") person is a specific individual already known to the nurse; the focalised noun *anthrōpos* ("person") suggests that she is, however, initially ignorant or unsure of everything about the "person" except her gender. The focalisation also allows the narrator to conceal her identity from the reader. The nurse's presence outside the guest-room in the middle of the night suggests suspicion or curiosity, deriving from something mentioned in the missing part of the text.

The next section describes her reaction:

> (2) Unable to restrain herself any longer because of the amazing nature of the vision (τὸ θαυμαστὸν τῆς φαντασίας), she ran to the mother, and shouting at the top of her voice "Charito and Demostratus", thought they should get up and go with her themselves to their daughter; for she had clearly been alive (πεφηνέναι γὰρ ζῶσαν)[9] and was with the guest in the guest-room through some divine will (διά τινα θείαν βούλησιν).

Two more actors appear here for the first time in our text, but were probably already known to the original readers; Charito and Demostratus are the mistress and master of the house in which the action is set. The narrative occludes the moment of the nurse's recognition of the "person" as their daughter, partly to allow the dramatic revelation to her parents, but partly also because this narrator often (but not invariably) chooses not to tell us of the inner thoughts and emotions of his characters but to narrate only what could have been seen or heard by a hypothetical observer of the action. The focalised phrase τὸ θαυμαστὸν τῆς φαντασίας[10] equivocates about the veracity

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[7] The translation of "Phlegon" (which will be quoted in its entirety) is my own, and favours the literal over the elegant in order to preserve the deliberate obscurities of the Greek.

[8] Her gender is established by a participle in § 2.

[9] Note that the nurse does not say "she appeared to be alive (but was not)", which would require the verb φαίνομαι ("appear") to govern an infinitive, not a participle as here.

[10] The Greek word *phantasia* (the origin of English "fantasy") can denote images derived from both sense perception and imagination; it is also closely cognate to *phantasma*, "apparition", in the sense of "ghost".

of what the nurse has seen and her inability to believe it. This narrative will consistently thematise belief and credibility in a clearly metaliterary way, and consistently lays stress on the reactions of its actors to the amazing and incredible. The daughter's living presence is obviously the central issue; there is apparently no moral concern about her being in a man's bedroom. We can deduce a back-story in which the daughter had been lost in some sense, feared or believed dead. The reader of the truncated text will have to piece this together; some of it was known already to the original readers, but it is not clear how much.

> (3) When Charito heard this strange story (παράδοξον λόγον), the result was that her soul was stunned (ἐκπλαγῇ) at first and she fainted because of the magnitude of the news and the confusion (ταραχὴν) of the nurse, but soon she remembered her daughter and wept, and finally convicted the old woman of madness and told her to go away immediately. (4) But when the nurse rebuked her and said outspokenly that she was sane and healthy, but if through inaction she refused to see her own daughter [...],[11] reluctantly Charito, partly being forced by the nurse and partly wanting to know what had occurred, went to the door of the guest-room. But more time having passed, as if a second report had been made,[12] Charito came late. (5) Wherefore it occurred that they were already asleep. Peering in, the mother thought she recognised the clothes and the shape of the face, but having no way to establish the truth, she decided that she should keep quiet. She hoped to get up early and surprise the person, or, if she was too late, to question Machates about everything; for when questioned about so important a matter he would never lie. So she said nothing and left.

Charito is resisting the nurse's report and interpretation of what she has seen: it is easier to think the nurse mad than to believe her. Even when she sees a form that has something familiar about it, she refuses to believe that it is her daughter: again we have that focalised word *anthrōpos* ("person"), and a suspicion that her house-guest's visitor might sneak off in the small hours. She seems to think that Machates would have some inhibitions about telling the truth, but would overcome them when he realised what was at issue and would put her mind at rest by confessing to having smuggled a girl into his room. This is the end of the first of the narrative's clearly indicated time-units. The rest of the night passes un-narrated.

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11 There is a dramatic aposiopesis at this point: the nurse leaves her sentence uncompleted.

12 ὡς ἂν δευτέρας ἀγγελίας συντελεσμένης; the text has been doubted here but is defended by Stramaglia 1995, 203–204. The sense seems to be while she was arguing with the nurse, Charito could have had time to send someone else to check her story.

> (6) At daybreak it happened that the one (τὴν μὲν, i.e. the "person") had departed unobserved, either through some divine will or spontaneously (εἴτε διὰ θείαν βούλησιν εἴτε κατ'αὐτοματισμὸν λαθοῦσαν ἀπελθεῖν), but that when the other (τὴν δὲ, i.e. Charito) arrived she was angry with the young man because of the departure, and telling the guest everything from the beginning (πάντα ἐξ ἀρχῆς), she embraced Machates' knees and asked him to tell the truth, concealing nothing.

The narrator's antithesis between the girl's departure and the mother's arrival, and the fact that the alternative explanations are offered before the mother's arrival, suggest that they are the narrator's explanations, and not the character's. The use of alternative explanations is a device of authentication: it implies that the narrator does not have full knowledge of the story, and thus that the story has a reality outside the narrative.[13] This is the first suggestion in the surviving text that the narrator is something other than an omniscient and transparent reporter. The explanations are disturbing in themselves. The Greek is ambiguous—probably deliberately so: the explanations could apply to the infinitive ἐξελθεῖν or to the participle λαθοῦσαν. In the first case they would explain the reasons for her departure, in the second how she was able to get out of the house without being seen. The first of them invokes the possibility of divine agency and exactly recalls the nurse's words in § 2. The second is inscrutable: it may mean no more than "by chance", but also suggests something some sinister which does not involve the person's volition. This section also begins the narrative's exchanges of information between its characters. The actors in this scene each know part of the story but not the whole; the narrative records their struggles to assemble the pieces of the jigsaw and achieve complete knowledge. In this sense they are readers in the text, whose activities mirror those of a first-time reader. The reader's assembly of the *histoire* advances in step with that of the actors, though they have the advantage. "Everything from the beginning", which Charito tells Machates, covers more than the events of the foregoing night: this is the earlier part of the daughter's story, which the text is hiding from its readers, and again the narrator conspicuously avoids releasing any precise information—which suggests that the teasing avoidance of the whole truth was always part of the text's dynamics. Whatever had happened before our text begins, Machates was ignorant of it, but he now knows more than the reader of the extant text, and probably more than the reader of the original.

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[13] See Morgan 1982 for Heliodorus' exploitation of this device in his novel, *Ethiopian Story*.

The narrative works by building parallel scenes in which the characters take it in turns to learn something, and react with amazement.

> (7) The young man, being distressed, was confused (διεταράχθη), but eventually revealed the name, that it was Philinnion; and he narrated the beginning of her entry, and he revealed her desire with which she came, and that she said she came to him without the knowledge of her parents, and, wanting to make the matter believable (βουλόμενος ποιῆσαι τὸ πρᾶγμα πιστόν), he opened his chest and brought out the things that had been left by the person: the gold ring which he had got from her and the breast-band which she had left on the previous night. (8) When Charito saw such evidence, she cried aloud and, tearing her clothes and mantle, casting the head-dress from her head, falling to the ground and embracing the recognition-tokens, made her grief from the beginning (ἐποίει ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὸ πένθος).

Because we do not know everything that Machates has been told, we cannot understand the nature of his confusion (which repeats that of the nurse in §3). He has heard something too terrible to believe, and, like Charito before him, he resists. The phrase 'to make the matter believable' has two distinct levels of meaning. Firstly, he wants to corroborate his own story to others and prove that he is telling the truth; but, more than that, he wants literally to make what has happened credible, to disprove the incredible to himself: so he produces material tokens which his visitor has left, which prove (as does her sexual desire) her substantiality, that she is not what he has been told she is. Two tokens perhaps imply two visitations: the one the nurse witnesses in §1 and one on the night before that, when something occurred to awake her curiosity. But Machates' revelations bring new mysteries for the reader, who will never know the whole story. Does Machates know Philinnion's name simply because his recent visitor has told him it, or did her know her, or of her, from the past? If so, what was their relationship? Did he know that Philinnion is the name of his hosts' daughter?[14] In other words, does he think he has been engaged in naughtiness with his hosts' daughter? That might explain his reluctance to confess. But in that case he must have been unaware of any of the circumstances surrounding her until Charito told him "everything from the beginning". If he does not think his lover is the daughter of the house, who does he think she is?

His tokens have the opposite effect to what he intended. Although the narrator here does not choose to tell us her thoughts and emotions, this

[14] We shall see below that there is reason to think that the reader of the complete text would already have encountered this name as that of the daughter of Charito and Demostratos.

is for Charito a moment of epiphany when she knows for certain that Machates' lover is her own daughter. But rather than joy at the return of someone believed dead, she is plunged into mourning. Here again the Greek is designedly ambiguous: "she made her grief from the beginning" could mean either that she is going through the whole process of mourning for a second time, or that only now is she able to begin to mourn properly. The full significance of those tokens will only become apparent to the reader later.

> (9) The guest observed what was happening and everyone affected and mourning, as if they were about to bury the person now (ὡσανεὶ νῦν μέλλοντας κατορύττειν τὴν ἄνθρωπον). He broke down and asked them to stop, promising that, if she came, he would show her to them. And she, being persuaded and enjoining him not to think casually of his promise, departed to her own room.

Here much depends on how we read the "as if" clause. If it is a comment by the narrator, and if the reader of the original knew much more of the earlier parts of the *histoire* than is preserved in our text, then the meaning would be quite different from what it is for a first-time reader of the extant text. For that person, and for the original reader, if (as I suspect) the narrator has kept many of the details secret, it is not clear whether the "now" is contrasted with the past or the future.[15] On the other hand, it is easy enough to read the "as if" as part of Machates' focalisation, as his perception of their actions; but what it means to him depends on what is included in the "everything from the beginning" and how much of what he has been told is in the reader's domain. In a way that is not wholly the result of its fragmentary condition, the narrative seems to go out of its way to leave some of its loose ends untied, to tantalise its reader with a full understanding which is always just out of reach.

This is the end of the second time-unit. The rest of the day passes without narration.

> (10) When night had come and it was the time when Philinnion was accustomed to come to him, they were waiting, wanting to know of her arrival, and she came. When she entered at the accustomed time and was sitting on the couch, Machates pretended that nothing was amiss, but wanting to investigate the matter and more than half disbelieving (τὸ πλέον οὐ πιστεύων) that he was consorting with a corpse (νεκρᾷ) who came to him so attentively at the same time, while she was still eating and drinking with him he did not believe what they had forewarned him of (ἀπίστως εἶχεν οἷς ἐκεῖνοι προήγγειλαν), but

[15] In other words, does this mean "as if they were about to bury her now [although in fact they have already buried her]", or "as if they were about to bury her now [although in fact she has not been buried and cannot be buried yet since the body is not there]"?

> thought that some tomb-robbers had opened the tomb and sold the clothes and jewellery to the person's father. Wanting to know the truth (ἀκρίβειαν), he sent his slaves secretly to call them.

The meeting is presented via the focalisation of Machates. Particularly striking is his use of the word *nekra* ('female corpse'). This has not occurred in the text before this point, but clearly represents something of what he has just been told by Charito. However, it is a blunt word, which Machates uses to himself to express his disgust and horror; we must read it as a crude mental paraphrase of the mother's more delicate account, and as such the focalisation conveys Machates' state of mind. In addition, the word stresses the woman's corporality: a *nekra* is not a disembodied spirit. Through Machates' eyes we see her eating and drinking, and follow his thought processes into another resistance to this counter-intuitive concept. Food and drink sustain life; sex creates life. These things contradict death. This story calls the basic categories of "alive" and "dead" into question by inviting us to imagine a being who is both and neither. We recall that the nurse's perception in §2 was that Philinnion was clearly alive. Those who believed Philinnion dead are made to think of her as alive; those who have recent experience of her as a living being are forced to think of her as dead. Rather than face that fundamental impossibility, Machates reaches for a metanarrative disbelief and tries to construct a rationalistic alternative; that he is the victim of an imposture.[16]

It is worth thinking about the implications of his counter-scenario in constructing the *histoire*. Desperately hypothetical though it is, in Machates' mind such an imposture would not have worked if he had been able to recognise the real Philinnion, nor if he had known the real Philinnion to be dead. This implies that he has no prior—or at least no recent—acquaintance with her. On the other hand, there would have been no point in an impostor passing herself off as Philinnion unless the name meant something to him and he would respond favourably to it. The clothes and jewellery which he suspects to have been stolen must be the ring and breast-band which his lover has left with him. This explains Charito's reaction in §8: these are objects from Philinnion's tomb which she has recognised

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[16] The motifs of this alternative can be paralleled from the Greek novels. The robbing of the heroine's tomb reminds us of the fate of Chariton's heroine Callirhoe, believed dead and buried, only to awaken from a coma and be rescued by robbers who had come to plunder the tomb. In Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, the heroine's father, when confronted with his long-lost daughter complete with recognition-tokens, immediately suspects that she is an impostor who has dishonestly come into possession of the tokens (Hld. 10.13).

as confirmation of her daughter's identitiy. The narrator has no interest in spelling out Machates' hypothesis, but he seems to consider himself the victim of an elaborate scam, perhaps to entrap him into a financially disadvantageous marriage by means of a "honey-trap".

At every turn, this narrative stresses its own paradoxical nature though the responses of its characters, which direct the responses of its readers:

> (11) Demostratus and Charito came quickly, and when they saw her they were at first speechless and stunned because of the strangeness of the sight (διὰ τὸ παράδοξον τῆς ὄψεως), but later they cried aloud and fell on their daughter. And then Philinnion said just so many words to them: "Mother and Father, how unjustly have you begrudged me to be with the guest for three days in my family's house, causing no pain. Therefore you will grieve from the beginning because of your interfering (διὰ τὴν πολυπραγμοσύνην), and I shall depart back to the appointed place. For I did not come to this without divine will" (ἄνευ θείας βουλήσεως).[17] (12) Having said so many words, she immediately became a corpse (νεκρά), and the body was stretched out on the couch in full view. Her mother and father embraced her, and much noise and lamenting arose throughout the house because of the suffering, as an incurable mishap and incredible spectacle (ἀπίστου θεάματος) had taken place.

This is a moment of high drama. For the parents, the visitor is no longer a "person", but their daughter. However, the narrator makes no attempt to tell us what is in their hearts and minds, beyond the text's programmatic astonishment, but simply records their visible actions. Crucially, moreover, the narrative avoids explicitness, suggesting more than it actually says and raising urgent questions which it will not answer. Only when she has finished eating, drinking, and speaking does the narrator finally call Philinnion dead: we are left to suppose that she has been "dead" all along, but the narrator is not going to take responsibility for saying so. Dead people speak with special authority.[18] Her statement that her parents will grieve "from the beginning" echoes Charito's reaction to the tokens in § 8. But Philinnion's enigmatic words only raise new questions.

Her phrase "not without divine will" echoes and confirms the nurse's suggestion in § 2, and one of the narrator's own alternative guesses about her departure in § 6. But why have the gods made a special exception to the modalities of mortality in her case? And what exactly were the terms attached to it? Was her return to life specifically to make love with a man who seems to know her name but not recognise her or know much about

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17 At this point someone has written in the margin of the manuscript: "Oh, the lies and stupidity of the author!"

18 Compare the necromantic corpse in Heliodorus (6.14–15).

her? Or has she been allowed to return to her parental home and just struck lucky with a handsome lodger? Was her furlough limited to three days by divine ordinance, or would it have continued longer, perhaps indefinitely, if her parents had not intruded? Why does their behaviour constitute *polypragmosynē* ("curiosity" or "interference"),[19] and why were they not allowed to see her in the flesh? Is Machates right (§ 7) in supposing that she was motivated by sexual desire for him, or is something more sinister being hinted at?[20]

Much of the power of the moment derives from its intertextual resonances. The idea of a return to life through love calls to mind the stories of Orpheus and Eurydice, of Protesilaus and Laodameia, and of Alcestis; while the motif of a broken divine injunction through curiosity leading to loss again recalls Orpheus and Eurydice, but also the story of Amor and Psyche.[21]

For a reader of the truncated version of the text something unexpected now occurs:

> (12) The matter quickly became noised abroad through the city and was reported to me. (13) So for that night I controlled the mobs that were gathering at the house, taking care that there should be no unrest after such a rumour circulated. (14) At first daybreak the theatre was full. When everything had been told in turn, it was decided that first we should enter the tomb, open it, and discover whether the body was on the couch or we would find the place empty. For not even six months had passed since the person's death.

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[19] A difficult and complex word, with no single English equivalent. On the notion as a philosophical concept, see de Filippo 1990/1999; and for the motif in ancient fiction, see Hunter 2009 and now the important discussion in Whitmarsh 2011: 185–191.

[20] In Goethe's elaboration of the story, for example, she was the guest's betrothed, who died in her mother's place. The mother has now broken a promise and affianced her younger daughter to the same man. The elder daughter has left her grave to suck his blood rather than let another have him. Goethe was no doubt inspired by the story of the vampire-bride at Corinth in Philostratus (*Vit.Apoll.*4.25).

[21] Orpheus was allowed to bring his beloved Eurydice back from the Underworld, on condition that he did not look back at her during the ascent, but of course he did so and lost her forever. Laodameia was parted from her husband Protesilaus on their wedding-night when he was called to join the Greek expedition against Troy. He was fated to be the first Greek casualty of the war, but such was Laodameia's grief that he was allowed to return from the dead to consummate the marriage. Rather than be parted from him again, Laodameia killed herself to join him in death. Alcestis agreed to die in place of her husband Admetus, but was fetched back from the Underworld by Heracles; in Euripides' play she is at first not recognised by her husband. In Apuleius' story of Amor and Psyche, Psyche is made the bride of Amor, but is not allowed to know his identity or to see him. Unable to restrain her curiosity, she breaks the injunction and loses him, eventually being reunited after performing a series of tasks including a descent to the Underworld.

Here we discover that the apparently unremarkable external narrator is in fact himself part of the story; he will become an important actor in its next stage. His precise identity is not revealed in our text, but it is clear that he is the chief civil authority in the city. Realisation that this is a different type of narrative from what we had supposed raises new questions about its techniques. Internal narration needs documentary trails: how does the narrator know what he narrates? This question is answered by the rehearsal of events in the public arena, but attention is also directed back to the sheer amount of narrating and exchange of information that has taken place between the characters prior to this moment. The partial (and in the text un-narrated) narratives of the nurse to Charito, of Charito to Machates, and of Machates to Charito are repeated in the theatre, and place the narrator in possession of the whole story, every part of which is authenticated by the autopsy of one of the actors, but which does not embody the order of experience of any one of them. Some of what the narrator hears in the theatre no doubt covers what is missing from our text, but it is also clear that his narrative occludes parts of the story. As yet we do not know the occasion of the narrator's narration, nor the identity of his narratee: both these facts were almost certainly known to the original reader, and provide a plausible explanation for the form and limitations of the narrator's narrative, on which so many of the author's effects depend.

The introduction of the narrator as an actor in events also marks a radical shift in setting. Hitherto the action has been confined to Demostratus' house, but the narrator is a public man, and this second act takes place in civic and public space. To some extent the sequence of events mirrors that of the first section. In each case an incredible event is reported to someone in authority (nurse to Charito; people to the narrator); that person intervenes, and seeks confirmation through physical proof. Stress continues to be placed on both the incredible nature of events and their corroboration.

> (15) When the vault was opened by us, where all the family were placed when they passed away, the bodies were lying visible on the other couches, and the bones of those who had died longer ago, but only on the one where Philinnion was placed and eventually entombed we found lying the iron ring, which belonged to the guest, and the gilded cup which she got from Machates on the first of the days. (16) Being amazed and stunned (θαυμάσαντες δὲ καὶ ἐκπλαγέντες), we immediately went to Demostratus into the guest-room to see the body, if it truly was there to be seen. And seeing her lying dead on the ground,[22] we gathered into the assembly. For what had taken placed was big and incredible (μεγάλα τε ἦν καὶ ἄπιστα).

[22] The significance of this detail is never explained; we had earlier been told that

The reactions of the narrator exactly recall those of the other actors.[23] The economy of the narrative is striking. The exact rationale of the visit to the cemetery is not spelled out: we are left to work out that the presence of Philinnion's body in her tomb would disprove the incredible story. The narrator is experiencing exactly the same sort of mental resistance that prompted Machates to hypothesise a grave-robbery. The significance of the two objects is also not spelled out, but we can see that on Philinnion's first visit rings were exchanged. These things clearly mean something to the dead girl: she has not simply discarded them but has taken them "home" to treasure and remember. However, if the focus of the domestic part of the narrative has been analeptic (corroborating the truth of what has happened), the civic focus is proleptic.

> (17) There being vigorous uproar in the assembly, and virtually no one being able to interpret the events, Hyllus was the first to rise to his feet, who had a name among us not only as the best soothsayer but also a fine augur, and in other respects a man of exceptional vision in his craft. He told us to confine the body outside the borders—for now it was not good for her to be placed in the ground inside the borders—and to appease Hermes Chthonios and the Eumenides, and then he gave orders for everyone to be cleansed and to purify the temples and perform the customary things for the chthonic gods. Privately he told me to sacrifice to Hermes, Zeus Xenios and Ares concerning the king and affairs, and to perform these things not casually. (18) When he had revealed this, we did what had been enjoined, but the guest Machates, to whom the ghost (τὸ φάσμα) had come, put an end to his life in despondency.

The identity of the king, and the location of the setting are not clear in our text. For a reader of our "Phlegon", the imprecision adds to the text's enigmatic power, leaving the story poised between realism and fantasy, but we shall see these details were known to the original readers. At this point, the protocols of internal narration are fully observed: the narrator has been able to describe the emotions and reactions of the characters on the basis of a documentary chain of information, but after the assembly he no longer has access to the thoughts of Machates, and cannot tell us exactly what led him to suicide. The reticence is eloquent, though: we do not need to have the loss and horror he has suffered spelled out for us. But the text has one more surprise for us:

Philinnion collapsed on the couch (§12). Perhaps we are to suppose that she had made one final and desperate effort to return to her grave. But the narrator is not interested in this sort of hypothesis.

[23] §3 (Charito) ἐπλαγῇ γενομένην; §11 (Charito and Demostratus) γενομένων … ἐκπλαγῶν.

So if you decide to write to the King about these things, send me a letter too, so that I can send you some of the persons who provide detailed accounts. With best wishes (ἔρρωσο).

II. Having Read "Phlegon"

It is only at the very end of our text of "Phlegon" that we discover that we have been reading a letter. We can assume, however, that the epistolary formula with which the letter ends reflected an epistolary opening to the original; the usual form would be for the writer to name himself and his addressee. I want to reflect now on the nature and function of the text's epistolarity.[24]

First of all, the suggestion that the superior officer to whom the letter is addressed might wish to refer the case to the highest authority completes the documentary chain, by placing the letter as a physical object firmly in the public domain. We might imagine that the letter, together with a covering letter from the superior officer, and possibly further correspondence and depositions from witnesses, formed part of an imaginary official archive, and that the author of the story of Philinnion posed as an editor publishing interesting documentary material he had discovered.[25] Letters are an excellent way to authenticate (or 'authenticate') fiction, but the author then has to invent processes of preservation and transmission that brought the document into his possession: making the correspondence official and therefore archivable resolves this problem.

I have just introduced the idea of "authentication" or "authority". Ghost-stories and stories of the supernatural are generically concerned with the boundaries between the credible and the incredible, and so become obsessive about authority and documentation, even when the story is written and read as fiction.[26] But these are equally concerns of an inferior administrator writing to his superior; such a person is instinctively at pains to assert and prove his veracity. Thus the epistolary form and the particularity of narrator

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[24] For another epistolary narrative which tailors verisimilar epistolary features to the demands of the narrative, see further in this volume Hodkinson (pp. 335–344) on [Aeschines] *Ep.* 10.

[25] An exactly similar device of authentication was employed by the novelist Antonius Diogenes, who (if I understand his strategy correctly from the summary by Photius) presented himself as publishing a letter (24 books long!) written by a Macedonian soldier to his wife; see Morgan 2009. For "pseudo-documentarism" more broadly, Ní Mheallaigh 2008 is indispensable.

[26] See further below. I define 'fiction' as an untrue narrative without intention to deceive, recognised as untrue by both sender and recipient.

and narratee provide a convenient excuse and disguise for the text's concern to proclaim and prove its own truthfulness.

The earliest parts of the letter as preserved in "Phlegon" read as an external and largely un-focalised narration. This too is accounted for by the epistolary persona of a junior official trying to provide an objective and coherent account of events for his superior. Letter-writers, real and fictional, have to construct a persona for themselves appropriate to their addressee and the purpose of the correspondence.[27] Moreover, real letters do not need to tell their recipients what they already know. This is a serious technical problem for writers of fictitious letters intended for a reading public: they must give their readers sufficient information to follow the story without breaking the illusion of epistolarity by appearing to treat their fictitious narratees as suffering from amnesia. In the fictitious context of this particular letter, a systematic and dispassionate exposition of the facts of the case is apt for a fictitious narratee who has no prior knowledge of the events and is too busy and important to read unnecessary detail. Something approximating to a conventional zero-focalised omniscient narrative characterises the narrator as someone who has taken care to inform himself fully and conscientiously reconstruct the true story. It would not have been appropriate in this epistolary context for the narrator simply to report the various sub-narratives presented to him in his official capacity, nor to comment on them in much detail; his superior needs a pre-digested account. Similarly it is not appropriate for him to strive for emotional response, though the author has perhaps allowed himself more literary effects than would have been indulged by a real letter-writer in such a situation. His lack of concern for Machates' state of mind in committing suicide is also realistic: what matters to the narrator is that one of the central witnesses is no longer available. It is also in character for the junior to magnify his own role in events, so that the switch from external to internal narration is also properly motivated within the fictional context. Finally it makes sense for this narrator to produce a narrative which is, to some degree, the narrative of his discovery of events rather than a narrative of the events themselves: as in a detective story, this enables the disjunction of *récit* and *histoire*. The point is that the features which make this ghost-story effective as a literary text for its reader are naturalised within it by its fictitious epistolary context.[28]

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[27] Cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 11.

[28] I forbear to offer a detailed commentary on the prose style of the Greek. Suffice it to say that it largely eschews a "literary" register, and arguably presents a pastiche of official language: the use of *anthrōpos* ("person") is a case in point. If, as I believe, it is a product of

At this stage, it would be as well to clarify the status of this letter. It owes its place in "Phlegon"'s collection of paradoxography to someone who took it at face value as a truthful account of something that really happened.[29] No modern reader will read it in that way, I imagine. The real question, then, is the nature of its untruthfulness. It has been described in some of the secondary literature as a "forgery".[30] By this I would understand a document whose creator knew it to be untrue, but intended it to be accepted as genuine and for literal credence to be given to its contents: in fact, a lie. I think this is naive. We are dealing here with fiction, good readers of which will always have understood that what they are reading is not true in a literal sense. The frisson of such a story lies in entertaining imaginatively the possibility that it might be true, while knowing intellectually that it is not true.[31] It is typical of modern tales of the supernatural that they should equip themselves with a provenance and *Beglaubigungsapparat*: not in order that they should be believed as literally true, except by very naïve readers, but as a move in the game of fictive belief, crucial in exploring these margins of the credible.[32]

The epistolary format is the ancient equivalent, more or less, and is exploited with great skill. In particular, as well as enabling the play with categories of belief and believability, the form also allows the author to occlude the most supernatural parts of the *histoire*, either because the fictional narrator has no documentary access to them, or because he is so characterised that they simply do not interest him. But the author understands well that, in this kind of story, to tell all is to tell too much, and that it is the sense that there is something large and frightening just out of reach of our

the imperial period, its author has made a conscious effort to avoid the prevalent literary Atticism and to use a form of Greek appropriate to the letter's dramatic date.

29 See Morgan 1996. Paradoxography is a collection of material based on the principle of "fact is stranger than fiction". Its purpose is negated if either writer or reader believes the material not to be true.

30 For example, Hansen 1989: 105: "It has long been recognised that all three narratives [the first three items in "Phlegon"] were probably composed by the same hand, or, more precisely, that they were counterfeited by the same hand [...] For the story of Philinnion our creative forger ..." To be fair, Hansen 1996: 67 speaks of these same three pieces as "strange and amazing fiction in the guise of history".

31 On this balance between "make-believe" and "make believe", see Morgan 1993.

32 Jay Anson's *The Amityville Horror* (subtitled *A true story*), for example, begins with a pseudo-academic preface by "Reverend John Nicola", and then sources its plot from information in the mainstream media, all fictitious, of course. Not but what a quick search of the interweb will demonstrate that a lively debate continues between literal believers and exposers of a hoax, both groups equally failed readers of fiction.

comprehension that gives the text its fascination and nagging power. But before we explore what is left unsaid, there is another witness to call.

III. A Surprise Witness

As part of my own narrative strategy, I have been withholding information, while dropping hints that there is more than I have told. It is time to confront the other witness to the original text, which comes from a surprising source. This is a passage from Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Republic*, where he is discussing the myth of Er in Book 10.[33] The particular point at issue is whether Plato was guilty of falsehood in his story of how Er came back to life twelve days after dying in battle, and was able to report what he had seen in the afterlife. Proclus defends Plato by collecting accounts of *anabiōsis* ("return to life"). After several other cases he invokes the authority of Naumachius of Epirus, whom he describes as "a man who lived in the time of our grandfathers".[34] Naumachius is the source for four cases of revivification. The first case is that of Polycritus the Aetolarch, who came back to life after nine months and spoke wisely in the assembly of the Aetolians. This story is also in "Phlegon", where it is the second item of the collection, introduced as deriving from Hiero of Alexandria or Ephesus.[35] Proclus tells us that, according to Naumachius, Hiero of Ephesus and other "historians" (ἱστορικούς) wrote to Antigonus the King and others of their friends who were not present about what had occurred. If this is correct it means that Naumachius presented this story in the form of a series of letters, though there is no trace of epistolarity in the version in "Phlegon", the compiler of which was more interested in amazing content than literary form.[36] Proclus then cites, still from Naumachius, the recent cases of Eurynous of Nicopolis (who came back to life fifteen days after his funeral, and said he had seen and heard many wonderful things beneath the earth but was not allowed to speak of them; thereafter he lived a long and morally improved life) and

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33 *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii* II. 115–116 Kroll.

34 II.115.8–9 Kroll: ἀνὴρ ἐπὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων πάππων γενονώς.

35 "Phlegon" gives us a much more detailed story, and it is a corker. Polycritus died four days after marriage. His posthumous child was a hermaphrodite, and the revenant Polycritus turns up while the assembly is discussing how to react to this portent. He requests that they hand the child over to him, but then, while they hesitate, he seizes the child and devours it, all except for its head, which proceeds to utter a prophecy in verse.

36 Hansen 1996: 98–101 finds structural, thematic and stylistic similarities between this composition and the story of Philinnion. These might be indications of common authorship.

Rufus of Philippi (who rose again on the third day, and said he had been sent back by the gods of the Underworld to put on the games he had promised, and died again immediately after doing so).

> And the colophon of these is Philinnion, in the time when Philip was king. She was the daughter of Demostratus and Charito of Amphipolis who died when newly married; she was married to Craterus. In the sixth month after her death she came back to life and for many nights in succession secretly consorted, because of her love for him (διὰ τὸν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔρωτα), with a certain young man called Machates, who had come to the house of Demostratus from his fatherland of Pella. And when she was detected she died again, but not before saying that she had done this in accordance with the will of the spirits of the underworld; and she was seen by everyone lying dead in her father's house. And the place which had previously received her body was disinterred and seen to be empty by her family, who had gone there in disbelief at what had happened. This is revealed by letters, some written by Hipparchus and some to Philip by Arrhidaeus who had been entrusted with the affairs of Amphipolis.

Not very much is known about Naumachius of Epirus. We should not press Proclus' dating of him too closely as an indication that he lived exactly two generations earlier than Proclus himself, that is around the middle of the fourth century.[37] Proclus refers to him again later in his commentary on the *Republic* as the author of a *monobiblos* ("pamphlet") on two problems in the myth of Er.[38] This is clearly the source from which Proclus has derived the material he cites. Given (a) that Naumachius apparently had the two cases of revivification included in "Phlegon" in the reverse order; (b) that in Naumachius the Polycritus story was in epistolary form, but is not in

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37 As does Rohde 1877/1901, 335/180. πάππος can mean "ancestor" in general as well as "grandfather" in the strict sense. Proclus means here little more than "a couple of generations ago".

38 II.329 Kroll. In this passage Proclus is discussing how Er was able to see the souls of Orpheus and Ajax among those about to be born. "I must not pass over the attempt [to solve this problem] by one of our predecessors, I mean Naumachius of Epirus, whom I mentioned earlier when comparing the stories of those who had *anabiōsis* which he collected (ἅς ἐκεῖνος ἤθροισεν). He composed a *monobiblos* about two problems concerning this myth, about *anabiōsis* and about how to solve the aforementioned difficulty …" Rohde seeks to identify him with the Naumachius whom the Suda records as the teacher of the medical writer Philagrius of Epirus, dating him "after Galen", and conceives of him as a "philosophically inclined doctor" (Rohde 1877/1901: 336–338/181–183). This argument is very tenuous, based only on a coincidence of names and a displaced connection with Epirus; there is nothing medical about any of the stories attributed to Naumachius of Epirus. It is not clear from the phrasing of this paragraph whether Proclus thought of him as making a compilation of previously existing stories, or composing a collection of his own.

"Phlegon"; (c) that in Naumachius there was more than one letter dealing with the Philinnion story; (d) that Proclus suggests that Philinnion was the last in of the set in Naumachius;[39] and (e) that Naumachius had at least two more cases of revivification not included in "Phlegon", we can rule out the possibility that Naumachius derived his material from "Phlegon". There remain two possibilities. One is that a pre-existing fictional letter was independently transcribed verbatim by two different compilers, widely separated by chronology, geography and interests. The other is that the letter originated with Naumachius and was taken from his work, directly or indirectly, by whoever was responsible for the compilation that comes to us under the name of Phlegon. My hunch is that the latter is the more likely hypothesis, but we cannot go beyond speculation.[40]

In any case the information added by Proclus is as follows:

- The story is set in Amphipolis, in the time of King Philip (by which must be intended the father of Alexander);
- Philinnion had been married to Craterus, and died soon after marriage;
- Machates had come from Pella, and Philinnion loved him;
- Our letter was supposedly written by Hipparchus to Arrhidaeus and was accompanied by at least one more letter from Arrhidaeus to Philip, and possibly by others.

IV. Digesting the Testimony

Some of this additional information will have been provided straightforwardly in the lost first section of our letter, but how much? We can assume that the original reader was aware of the epistolary form from the beginning, and that is also the conventional place to name the writer and recipient of a letter. Hipparchus must have introduced his narrative with some sort of justificatory preamble: "I feel it is my duty to inform you of a strange event that took place recently". The opening section of the narrative must have introduced the characters, whose names occur in the surviving text as if they are

[39] The Greek word *kolophōn* covers a semantic range from 'height of' to 'finishing touch'. It came to be used in a technical sense of the inscription or device placed at the end of a manuscript, recording perhaps the name of the scribe. The natural way to read Proclus here is that he has reproduced Naumachius' running-order of the four stories, with Philinnion as the final and climactic one.

[40] My hunch would, of course, involve dating "Phlegon" considerably later than Phlegon, the freedman of Hadrian.

already known to the reader. This is where the information about Machates' origin would naturally occur. Philinnion too was apparently already known to the reader before she is named in the surviving text. It is difficult to see how the information about her marriage to Craterus could be separated from the fact of her death shortly afterwards. This may have been given in one of the other letters in the fictional correspondence that Proclus read, but if it occurred in the lost part of our letter the original reader would have known from the start that Philinnion was dead. In that case, the hermeneutic dynamic of the narrative has been radically changed—for the better—by the loss of its beginning. Even so, we do not have to assume that the original reader knew the identity of Machates' nocturnal visitor all along. The moment when Machates names his lover is obviously a dramatic climax and seems to be intended as a surprise to the reader as much as to the characters. The first part of the narrative, then, may have played with encouraging the idea that the guest simply had a naughty girl in his room, while teasing the reader, through the nurse's suspicions, with hints of something more sinister. We cannot tell how explicit the nurse's suspicions were, or how explicitly the narrator conveyed them to the reader. However the story was introduced, the mere existence of a letter narrating it to an important official will have primed the reader to expect something out of the ordinary.

The information about Philinnion's marriage to Craterus is the most startling addition to our scenario. Proclus tells us that she died *neogamos* ("newly married"), and the inclusion of this detail suggests that it was in some way significant. The story of the bride who died on, or soon after, the day of her wedding is a staple of the ancient novel and epigram.[41] In this context, however, a more potent intertextual charge is provided by stories where the gods allow a return from the dead because a marriage has been so recent: with gender reversal the story of Protesilaus and Laodameia is an obvious example.[42] Philinnion's return seems in some way to be compensation for the early end of her marriage: divine will gives her a temporary exemption from the laws of mortality for the sake of love. But then why does she return to her parents' house and Machates and not to her husband? It is tempting to imagine that Machates was her true love in life, and her marriage to

[41] Szepessy 1972 surveys the material. Chariton's heroine, Callirhoe, is buried shortly after her wedding, but it is a *Scheintod* and she revives in her tomb. In Heliodorus, Charicles' natural daughter dies in a fire on her wedding-night.

[42] See n. 20 above.

Craterus, known as one of Alexander's generals, was an unwilling one, perhaps contracted by her father for political reasons. Perhaps her death was linked to her love: suicide, pining, or her unloved husband's malevolence are all possibilities. However, although Machates appears to have some connection with the family, knows that she was called Philinnion, and seems to know who Philinnion was, he also entertains the possibility that his visitor was an impostor in stolen clothes, which suggests that he is not familiar enough with the real Philinnion to be sure of recognising her. When Proclus tells us that she came to Machates "because of her love for him", that might as well mean a love conceived after her return to life as a pre-existing love that motivates her return.[43] These may well be details that were intentionally left enigmatic.

Our letter was part of a series: we know that it was accompanied at least by a letter from Arrhidaeus to Philip, but the conventional use of the plural form *epistolai* ("letter" or "letters") makes it impossible to know whether there were only two letters or more. However, we can speculate on how the framing worked and how it affected the reading of the story. Quite possibly our letter was introduced by one from Arrhidaeus forwarding it to the King, which may have been the vehicle by which some of the basic data was communicated to the reader, but one would hope that not too much was given away. The ending of our letter certainly provides a hook for a sequel, motivating its recipient to take matters further. It may have been followed by subsequent letters narrating further investigations, resolving some of the enigmas left by our letter: this may be where details of Philinnion's previous history appeared, so that it was only at the end of the sequence that the reader was able to construct the entire *histoire*. The association of the story of Philinnion in both "Phlegon" and Proclus with that of Polycritus, which Proclus reveals was also originally in letter form, suggests that epistolarity may have been a linking formal feature of the stories of revenants which Naumachius assembled under the pretext of commenting on the myth of Er (whether they were of his own invention, as I believe, or taken over *en bloc* from an earlier collection of spooky letters). So the *histoire* of Philinnion will have been along the following lines:

> Philinnion, daughter of Demostratus and Charito of Amphipolis, is married to the Macedonian general Craterus, perhaps unwillingly. Immediately after her

[43] He is probably paraphrasing Machates' comments about her desire (ἐπιθυμία §7). Proclus also refers to her visiting many nights in succession, whereas "Phlegon" limits her visits to three. This looks like a hasty misreading.

> marriage she dies, perhaps in distressing circumstances which her parents do not publicise, and is buried in the family vault. Six months later her parents are visited by Machates of Pella, not a complete stranger but not privy to the facts of Philinnion's death. Philinnion is allowed by divine will to return to life by night and visits her father's house; for some reason her parents must not know of her visits, and she must return to the grave during hours of daylight. While in the house she sees the handsome young guest and has sex with him; her deviant sexuality reflects her deviant life-status.[44] She tells him her name and he assumes that this is the daughter of the house acting without her parents' knowledge. They fall in love with each other. On each visit the two lovers exchange tokens. On the first visit, however, she was seen leaving, and the next night the nurse goes to check on the guest's room and sees her there. By the time she has convinced Charito to come and see, it is too late to do anything. Machates is now informed of the truth, but cannot believe it. He promises to show the girl to her parents the next night, but when they recognise her she dies definitively. Public investigation confirms the truth of what has happened, and measures are taken to cleanse the city of the pollution caused by the confusion of the basic categories of natural order.

What is interesting and sophisticated is the extent to which, even making allowance for what might have been told in the missing part of our letter or in other letters in the larger correspondence, so much of the *histoire* is left unclear, in particular on the supernatural level. Even the seer Hyllus, who might be expected to have insight into the supernatural, is confined to dictating rituals of purification. The documentary internal mode of narration implicit in the epistolary form is brilliantly exploited here. Neither letter-writer could possibly be in a position to know what took place on the divine level. Were the gods showing compassion to Philinnion or punishing her? Given that her body has not decayed, are we to imagine that she has been living this half-life ever since her death? The tokens show that she has been returning to her grave, but exactly what conditions apply to her visits to her home, and why must she not be recognised by her parents? What and whose is the divine will referred to on several occasions? Is the revenant Philinnion in any sense a person, the real Philinnion, or is her personhood forfeit, and she become no more than her appetites, with no moral restraint, or worse? What are its intentions? What was in Machates' mind after the discovery that his lover was a dead person? Why does Hyllus advise thorough cleansing and propitiation of the Olympian gods? It is

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[44] As a dead person, she presumably has no worries about falling pregnant; the sterility of the undead is also a prominent motif in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* tetralogy, part of the basic polarity of life and death with which such stories operate.

precisely these loose ends that engage the reader's imaginative exploration of the effects of subverting the categories of mortality and the horrors of their deviant margins. The narrator and the narratee are interested primarily in questions of civic administration, as defined by their characters and positions. The implied author knows more than the narrator, and the implied reader wants to know more than the narrator's narratee knows or wants to know. The reader is interested in the big modalities of human existence, and the emotional effect of extreme situations: every character in this story suffers unbearable, unspeakable loss, but the narrator barely comments on it. The actual reader, however, despite his or her desire, knows even less than the narrator's narratee. So the text's narratology and epistolarity are crucial elements in its failure to provide all the answers, mirroring our sense of helplessness and terror before the big questions of existence.

V. Broadening the Inquiry

The text insinuates itself into real history by playing with familiar names. King Philip is well known, and provides the dramatic date. There is no historically attested Hipparchus who might be associated with our fictitious letter-writer. On the other hand, a number of historical persons called Arrhidaeus are known, three of whom are in the right chronological area to be connected with the recipient of this letter:[45]

a) *RE Arridaios* (3): Philip's half-brother, executed in 348 BC, but otherwise obscure.
b) *RE Arridaios* (4): Philip's illegitimate and mentally defective son by a woman called (interestingly in this context) Philinna; he was manoeuvred on to the throne after the death of Alexander, but soon killed.
c) *RE Arridaios* (5): the Macedonian general who took Alexander's body to the temple of Ammon, and later played a part in the wars of the Successors.

Rohde originally thought that b) was the intended reference, but later changed his mind and opted for c).[46] We should remember, however, that this is not a historical document, and its writer is more interested in creating

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[45] The following entries refer to the bearers of the name enumerated in Pauly Wissowa's *Realenzyklopädie*.

[46] Rohde 1877: 330, still followed by Hansen 1996: 72; the second thoughts are in Rohde 1901: 178 n. 2, followed by Stramaglia 1999: 248.

an impression of authenticity than in precision. An analogous case occurs in Chariton, where the Persian king is called Artaxerxes, though his dates and actions do not coincide with those of a single historical Artaxerxes. But there are other interesting possibilities. We have seen that Naumachius presented this story in connection with Plato's myth of Er. One of the souls that Er sees in the Underworld is that of the ancient Pamphylian tyrant Ardiaeus the Great, being punished for his crimes.[47] Although the manuscripts of Plato are unanimous for the spelling Ἀρδιαῖος, and the name appears thus in most of the ancient commentators, there are signs that a variant Ἀριδαῖος existed in antiquity or that writers were already playing with the similarity. In his essay *On the Fortune of Alexander*, Plutarch, for example, alludes to the Platonic passage in a context which concerns the second of our Arrhidaei, Alexander's half-brother and successor.[48] And in his essay *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*, Plutarch tells of a man from Soli who died after falling from a height but revived on the third day. Like Er he saw the after-life, and encountered the spirit of a kinsman who addressed him as Thespesius; he replied that his name was not Thespesius but Aridaeus (the first time his name is revealed);[49] the kinsman replied that Aridaeus was his name previously but henceforth he is Thespesius (literally 'divine', 'more than human'). The three Greek names Ἀρριδαῖος, Ἀριδαῖος, Ἀρδιαῖος are similar enough to be regarded as variants of one another. In a way which is not easy to unravel, the name seems to have a special association with stories of the dead returning to life, which did not escape the author of our letter.

Craterus, the general of Alexander, was in reality married to Phila, the daughter of Antipater;[50] Philinnion is the diminutive form of her name. Of course, it is not true that the revenant of our story is intended to be identified in a literal sense with the historical figure: her parentage is different, and the historical Phila was married to Craterus in 322 BC, long after the death of Philip. She was later pressed into a marriage with Demetrius the Besieger, bore him several children and eventually committed suicide when he was defeated. Nevertheless, the reader is left with a feeling that the world of the fiction is not too dissimilar from that of familiar history, that the jigsaw of history has been shaken up a bit and reassembled to make room for fiction,

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[47] *Republic* 615c.
[48] *Moralia* 336d–337d.
[49] *Moralia* 564d.
[50] Diod.18.18.7, 19.59.3; this is *RE Phila* (3). See also Heckel 2006: 207.

but not radically altered, and that familiar bits of it remain visible. Once again, there is a parallel effect in the novel of Chariton: his heroine Callirhoe is the daughter of the Syracusan statesman Hermocrates, and is bigamously married for a while to a Milesian aristocrat called Dionysius; the historical Hermocrates had a daughter, unnamed in our sources, who was the wife of the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius.[51] In our case the sense of a familiar association of names is compounded by the fact that another Phila, one of Philip's wives, was the sister of a certain Machatas.[52]

However, Phila the daughter of Antipater is a figure already familiar to readers of Greek fiction. The fascinating lost novel Τὰ ἄπιστα ὑπὲρ Θούλην (*Incredible Things beyond Thule*) by Antonius Diogenes, which is known to us principally through a summary by Photius,[53] was authenticated by an elaborate apparatus, in which a text was discovered in a mysterious tomb during Alexander's siege of Tyre, transcribed by the Macedonian soldier Balagrus and sent home to his wife, Phila, daughter of Antipater, in letter form.[54] The tomb belonged to a Tyrian family, including a brother and sister who had been rescued from a magic spell which made them dead by daytime, but allowed them to come alive by night; each morning they had to return to the grave. During one of her nocturnal reanimations the sister, Dercyllis, enters into an erotic relationship with the novel's protagonist and principal internal narrator, Deinias. These two texts, then, share a female protagonist who rises from her grave at night to engage in sexual activity; a family vault which authenticates the story; an epistolary presentation by a character peripheral to the main action which enables the author to pose as the editor of a document discovered in an archive of some sort; and the presence within the fiction of the historical daughter of Antipater and wife of Craterus. This is several coincidences too many to be chance.

The question then becomes one of the exact relationship between our letter and Antonius' novel. If we accept that Phlegon the freedman of Hadrian was responsible for the exact compilation of *mirabilia* preserved under his

51 Plut, *Dion* 3.

52 Athen. 557c; this is *RE Phila* (2).

53 Stephens and Winkler 1995: 101–157 provide text and translation of identified fragments of this work, and a translation (but frustratingly not the Greek text) of Photius' summary, and extensive discussion of the whole. Fusillo 1990 prints all the Greek texts, with a commentary.

54 μεταγραψάμενος διαπέμψειε τῇ γυναικί; the verb *metagraphō* admits a range of meanings from 'transcribing' to 'rewriting'; see Morgan 2009. Balagros is historically attested: see Heckel 2006: 67. There is no direct evidence apart from Antonius Diogenes for his marriage to Phila, but Antipater, son of Balagrus is epigraphically attested (*IG*. xi.2.287b.57 of 250 BC, which unsurprisingly does not record his mother's name).

name, we commit ourselves to a Hadrianic or pre-Hadrianic date for the composition of the letter.[55] Recent discussions of the dating of Antonius Diogenes put him within a range that includes the reign of Hadrian, though my own sense is that he is somewhat later, closer to the end of the second century.[56] If, on the other hand, we loosen the connection between "Phlegon" and Phlegon, we extend the range of possible dates for the letter to the time of Naumachius, a couple of generations before Proclus. This opens up the possibility that the author of the story of Philinnion knew Antonius' novel. That possibility becomes the more plausible if we can take the name of Philinnion's mother, Charito, as a nod towards the novelist Chariton, with whose novel we have already noted some similarity.[57] Despite the uncertainties about how much of the *histoire* had been given away in the lost part of the text preceding ours, it looks as if the original reader was being presented with an allusion to a story in which a return from death had a rational explanation: that the dead person was not really dead when buried. On the one hand, this encourages the reader of the epistolary fiction to entertain the possibility of a similar *Scheintod*, until the narrative definitively closes that possibility down, possibly as late as the moment when Philinnion speaks and dies for a second time. On the other hand, the similarity of names functions as a marker first of generic identity and then of generic difference: a hint that we should read the letter as fiction, followed by a realisation that it is a fiction of a non-Charitonian sort. The intertextual play with two novels of rather different kinds thus shapes the parameters within which the reader undertakes—and is aware of undertaking—the task of reconstructing the "true story" of Philinnion.[58]

My hypothesis entails these two propositions:

a) that the collection of *mirabilia* which has come to us under the name of "Phlegon" is not the work of Phlegon of Tralles, though some of the material in it may well have come from him. In particular the

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[55] Stramaglia 1999: 55–58 speculates that the first three items in "Phlegon", which share certain stylistic and compositional features, derive from a single Hellenistic collection of ghost stories.

[56] For the early date, Bowie 2002: 58–59 with references to earlier scholarship, followed by Tilg 2010: 126–127; my position has not changed since Morgan 1985.

[57] Cf. ps.-Aeschines' use of the name Callirhoe in *Ep.* 10 with Hodkinson (this volume pp. 339–340) to achieve a similar metaliterary evocation of Charitonian fiction.

[58] This metaliterary pairing of Chariton and Antonius Diogenes is perhaps more than a reflection of one novel-reader's random library acquisition: these two novelists are both closely linked with the city of Aphrodisias; see Bowersock 1994: 38–42; Tilg 2010: 126–127.

lengthy epistolary stories at the beginning of the collection, which differ markedly from the rest in form, scale, and literariness, are a later accretion;

b) that, since the two epistolary pieces are known to have been included in Naumachius' *Monobiblos* about the myth of Er, it is not economical to postulate an unknown author or authors for them. Far from being a serious philosophical or medical contribution, Naumachius' work used the Platonic myth as an umbrella under which to present a nexus of short stories concerning revenants in sophisticated literary forms.[59]

There is one final twist, however. Whoever was responsible for including the letter in "Phlegon" believed the story to be factually true. The whole point of paradoxography is to show that truth can be stranger than fiction. Knowingly to include fiction in a paradoxographical assemblage renders the enterprise meaningless. The compiler thus radically changed the meaning of the fictional letter by including it in his collection: a pleasantly spooky fiction became documentary proof of the existence of the supernatural. The inclusion of Philinnion in Proclus' defence of the *Republic* indicates an exactly similar misreading. On my hypothesis, Proclus himself misread both the protocols of the letter and the whole purpose of Naumachius' *Monobiblos*; the more traditional view makes him the inheritor of Naumachius' misreading of a third party's fiction. In either case, the misreading is perpetrated not by a challenged paradoxographer, but by a Platonist philosopher.

Oddly enough, exactly the same thing happened to Antonius Diogenes' novel, which appears to have been exploring the boundaries of credibility and the very nature of fiction in a profoundly meta-literary way.[60] Its very title is double-edged: *Apista* ("incredible things") denotes in Greek both that which is untrue because it is not credible, and that whose apparent incredibility is actually a warranty of its truth (i.e. paradoxography). Towards the centre of the 24-book novel, occurred a subordinate narrative, by a fourth-level narrator, of the life and school of Pythagoras. As with Philinnion,

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[59] If this is true, Naumachius' reader will have known from the beginning that all the stories involved a return to life. However, even the stories mentioned by Proclus show that this might cover a wide range of potential storylines, with the case of Rufus of Philippi, leaving his tomb after three days, looking more like a *Scheintod* than that of Polycritus, returning after nine months in the tomb as a mantic cannibal. The sequel to the revivification also differs in each of the stories. In any case, this is the sort of knowledge—like the knowledge that happy endings are generically necessary—that readers of fiction habitually suspend.

[60] Morgan 2007: 36–38, and the references there.

a secondary testimony is provided by a Neoplatonic philosopher: in this case Porphyry happily used the material from the centre of Antonius' ironically fictional edifice as simple historical evidence, and cites it accordingly in his biography of Pythagoras.[61] There is an oddity here which we cannot hope to unravel. We have real readers for two self-authenticating fictional narratives which are not just generically related but appear to have specific intertextual connections. Those readers are related by their philosophical agendas and backgrounds, and both misread fiction in what appears to us as a surprisingly simple-minded way. We can only conclude that in both cases the apparatus of authentication, of which epistolary form is a large component, has worked all too well, and that philosophers are not the wisest of men.

VI. Conclusions

We are dealing here with a fictional short story about the supernatural, which was certainly of interest to the ostensibly philosophical writer Naumachius of Epirus, and may even have originated with him.[62] This is not the place to embark on a discussion of the short story as a literary form in antiquity, though it is a nice point for discussion whether the issue raised by our text is a) the emergence of the short story in the history of Greek literary letters, or b) the exploitation of epistolary form in the history of the Greek short story. Nevertheless, it is clear that stories of this sort raise a number of difficulties for writer and reader for which epistolarity appears a perfect solution.

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[61] Stephens and Winkler 1995: 132–147 give the relevant passages from Porph. *Vita Pythagorae* 10–17, 32–45 and 54–55. John of Lydia, *de mensibus* 4.42 cites some of the same material as emanating from Book 13 of Antonius Diogenes.

[62] The connection of tales of the supernatural and philosophy is not unique to Naumachius. To take just one more example, Damascius of Damascus wrote a commentary on the *Phaedo*, and his "philosophical" interest in the survival of the soul after death emerges also in his four books of *paradoxa*, the third of which consisted of 63 stories of souls appearing after death. This collection was read in the ninth century by Photius, and noticed, very briefly and testily, in his *Bibliotheca* (*cod.* 130), as was the same author's *Life of Isidore* (*cod.* 242), which included an account of how souls of the dead joined the Roman army in the battle against Attila the Hun (*Vita Isidori* 63, p. 92 Zintzen = Stramaglia 199, 428). Photius implicitly recognises the fictitious nature of Damascius' work by including him alongside Lucian, Lucius (i.e. the narrator of the Greek *Metamorphoses*, the first two books of which served as a model for Apuleius' novel), Iamblichus, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus as an author whom he takes (wrongly) to have been influenced by Antonius Diogenes (Phot. 111b32–112a4; see Morgan 1985: 487–490).

Firstly there is the issue of authentication. Tales of the supernatural work at or beyond the boundaries of normal credibility and, even in fiction, need to be naturalised somehow. A letter from the hand of one of the actors in the story, particularly if, as in this case, it is addressed to a more or less historical recipient and located in a more or less historical context, is self-authenticating, and resolves the perpetual issue of how a narrator "knows" the story he tells. Nevertheless, the "history" implied by the letter is not that of the real world, most notably in the case of its central figure, Phila/Philinnion, the wife of Craterus. This is not carelessness or lack of resource, but a deliberate act of distancing which confirms the counterfactual nature of the *histoire*.

Secondly and connectedly, there is the matter of provenance. If we are to hear an "authentic" voice from the past, its transmission must be explained. The physical survival of a letter as an object provides the perfect channel. In this case, we can glimpse enough of the non-extant parts of the little nexus to which our letter belonged to see that part of the fictional apparatus was that the case formed part of a royal administrative archive in which the text could plausibly be preserved. This ploy enables the author to pose as the editor of an ancient text rediscovered.

Lastly, the appeal of the narrative for its reader lies essentially in its occlusions. This works at two levels, of anachronicity and of incomplete cognition. The story in *histoire*-order is far less powerful than the *récit*, which tantalises and puzzles the reader. Here, the epistolary form allows the epistolary narrator to tell not the story but his experience of the story. Earlier parts of our text are able to adopt a more or less zero focalisation because, we realise eventually, they summarise the depositions of witnesses in the case, but important aspects of the *histoire* are only disclosed analeptically through the direct actions of the narrator as actor (the opening of the tomb), which are narrated in their proper sequence. More importantly, the most interesting parts of the story are located at a level beyond the access of human knowledge. A zero-focalised narrative would have problems negotiating its knowledge or lack of knowledge of events taking place in the supernatural or even divine plane. Epistolary form enforces a rigid focalisation which plausibly explains, excuses and enables the vital omissions. In this case, the *personae* of both epistolary narrator and epistolary narratee exactly motivate the *récit*'s ostensible lack of interest in the unnarratably central elements of the *histoire*.

The exact context in which the story of Philinnion was presented to its original reader is lost to us, but Proclus' testimony confirms that it was not a stand-alone document. Our letter from Hipparchus to Arrhidaeus was

accompanied at least by a letter from Arrhidaeus to the King, and possibly by others in which Philinnion's back story, and perhaps later developments, were clarified. The original text was therefore less a short story in letter form than a mini-epistolary novel. Certainly in Naumachius' *monobiblos* or possibly (on the alternative hypothesis[63]) in an earlier collection, it was accompanied by at least one other story of the supernatural, that of Polycritus the Aetolarch, in the form of a series of letters. In either case, our letter must have been multiply framed: a contribution from the fictitious editor of the rediscovered document and an overarching "authorial" frame to justify the collocation of the several stories that made up the work as a whole. Naumachius presumably made a show of discourse about the myth of Er to connect the four or more stories that he told.

That original text must have been something of amazing sophistication and cleverness. Shorn of its frames and even of its beginning, and recontextualised in an assemblage of paradoxography, "Phlegon"'s letter is, if anything, even more intriguing.

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63 See above, n. 55.

EPISTOLARITY AND NARRATIVE IN PS.-AESCHINES *EPISTLE* 10*

Owen Hodkinson

I. Introduction

There are twelve letters attributed to the fourth century BC orator Aeschines; it is accepted by all that they are spurious, and most scholars would date them to the second century AD and later.[1] *Epistles* 1–9 and 11–12, however, are at least supposed to be from Aeschines while he is in exile from Athens: they are addressed to friends and enemies at Athens, or to the Athenian assembly, and they deal with the events that led to his exile—in short, they are very similar to, and imitative of, the letters attributed to Demosthenes, also from exile.[2] The tenth letter is quite different: it seems to bear no relation to the orator Aeschines whatsoever, and if it were not transmitted to us among the other ps.-Aeschines *Epistles* in manuscripts, no one would ever have thought to connect it to them,[3] nor to Aeschines.[4] *Epistle* 10 is essentially a short story or novella in epistolary form.

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* I am very grateful to participants at the conference for their discussion of this chapter, and especially to Patricia Rosenmeyer and the anonymous readers for very helpful comments on an earlier version.

[1] Spuriousness and a second century (or later) date: Blass 1887–1898: III. 2.185–186; Schwegler 1913: 73–79, who proposes a second century date for *Epp*. 1–9, somewhat later for 11–12 and 10 later again; this is followed by editions of Aeschines *Epp*. (Drerup 1904, Martin and de Budé 1928: 121–122) and many studies, e.g. Gallé Cejudo 1996: 35–36; cf. Goldstein 1968: 7, 78; and cf. Stirewalt 1993: 25 with n. 74 on *Ep*. 10 as "Milesian tale" and a typical example of Second Sophistic erotic literature; cf. also Weinreich 1911: 36–37, who is imprecise on many details but also argues that *Ep*.10. and two others are by (a) different author(s) from a group of nine letters known to Photius as by Aeschin.; Holzberg 1994a: 17 agrees with the second century date for the whole collection but does not think *Ep*. 10 is by a different author; Mignona 1996: 316 n. 5; 2000: 86 follows him.

[2] Cf. Goldstein 1968: 78.

[3] Notwithstanding the similarities noted below, nn. 23, 25, which are not substantial or striking enough to connect *Ep*. 10 to the others had it not been transmitted among them.

[4] Stöcker 1980 interestingly argues that the letter was intended by its author not to be *from* this Aeschines, but rather to be addressed *to an* Aeschines—Aeschines of Sphettos, i.e. the Socratic; if accepted, the name would explain its inclusion in the collection. I would not absolutely discount this theory (see further below, n. 24); but the identity or otherwise of the letter's characters with (fictionalised versions of) real persons will largely be immaterial to my reading of the fictive narrative.

Since the letter is not all that long and is unlikely to be familiar to many readers, the text and translation are included here in full:

> [1] Ὁ δὴ Κίμων οἷα κατὰ πόλιν ἑκάστην καὶ αἰγιαλὸν ἡμᾶς δέδρακεν, οὐκ ἔθους, οὐ νόμου φειδόμενος οὐδενός. Κατὰ θέαν εἰς Ἴλιον ἀφικόμην τῆς τε γῆς καὶ θαλάττης. Καὶ ἃ μὲν αὐτόθι, γράφειν ἐπεὶ δοκεῖ ὕλην ἄφθονον ἔχειν, σιωπήσω· δέδοικα γάρ, μὴ ποιητικῆς λαβόμενος φλυαρίας ἀπειροκαλεύεσθαι δόξω. Τὰ δὲ Κίμωνος ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν, "οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι", δυναίμην ⟨ἂν⟩ ἀρκέσαι λέγων.
>
> [2] Διατριβόντων γὰρ ἡμῶν πολλὰς ἡμέρας ἐν Ἰλίῳ καὶ μὴ πληρουμένων τῆς θέας τῶν τάφων, ἦν δέ μοι γνώμη μένειν ἕως ἅπαντα ἐπεξέλθω τὰ ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι ἔπη πρὸς αὐτοῖς ἑκάστοις, ὑπὲρ ὧν τὰ ἔπη ἐστὶ γιγνόμενα, ἐμπίπτει ἡμέρα ἐν ᾗ πειρῶνται τοὺς γάμους οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν θυγατέρων, ὅσων ἐπιτρέπει ποιεῖν ἡ ὥρα.
>
> [3] Ἐγένοντο δὲ συχναὶ αἱ γαμούμεναι. Νενόμισται δὲ ἐν τῇ Τρῳάδι γῇ τὰς γαμουμένας παρθένους ἐπὶ τὸν Σκάμανδρον ἔρχεσθαι, καὶ λουσαμένας ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔπος τοῦτο ὥσπερ ἱερόν τι ἐπιλέγειν, "λαβέ μου, Σκάμανδρε, τὴν παρθενίαν". Ἐν δὴ ταῖς ἄλλαις Καλλιρρόη ὄνομα παρθένος μεγάλη, πατρὸς δὲ οὐ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν, ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν ἧκε λουσομένη.
>
> [4] Καὶ ἡμεῖς ἅμα τοῖς τε οἰκείοις τῶν γαμουμένων καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὄχλοις πόρρωθεν τὴν ἑορτὴν καὶ τὰ λουτρὰ τῶν παρθένων, ᾗ θέμις αὐτὰ ἐξωτέρω ὁρᾶν, ἐθεώμεθα. Ὁ δὲ καλὸς κἀγαθὸς Κίμων ἐγκρύπτεται εἰς θάμνον τοῦ Σκαμάνδρου, καὶ στέφει ἑαυτὸν δόναξιν· ἦν δὲ αὐτῷ δηλαδὴ τὸ στρατήγημα τοῦτο καὶ ὁ λόχος ἐξ ἡμέρας ἐπὶ τὴν Καλλιρρόην εὐτρεπής.
>
> [5] Λουομένης δὲ καὶ τὸ εἰωθὸς ἔπος, ὡς μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπυθόμην, λεγούσης, "λαβέ μου, Σκάμανδρε, τὴν παρθενίαν", ἐκθορὼν ἐκ τῶν θάμνων ὁ Σκάμανδρος Κίμων "ἡδέως" ἔφη "δέχομαι καὶ λαμβάνω Καλλιρρόην Σκάμανδρος ὤν, καὶ πόλλ' ἀγαθὰ ποιήσω σοι". Ταῦτα ἅμα λέγων καὶ ἁρπάσας τὴν παῖδα ἀφανὴς γίγνεται.
>
> [6] Οὐ μὴν καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἀφανὲς γίγνεται, ἀλλὰ τέτταρσιν ὕστερον ἡμέραις πομπὴ μὲν ἦν Ἀφροδίτης, ἐπόμπευον δὲ αἱ νεωστὶ γεγαμημέναι καὶ ἡμεῖς τὴν πομπὴν ἐθεώμεθα. Ἡ δὲ νύμφη ἰδοῦσα τὸν Κίμωνα ὡς μηδὲν αὐτῷ κακὸν συνειδότα ἅμα ἐμοὶ θεώμενον, προσεκύνησε, καὶ ἀποβλέψασα εἰς τὴν τροφόν, "ὁρᾷς" εἶπε "τίτθη, τὸν Σκάμανδρον, ᾧ τὴν παρθενίαν ἔδωκα;" καὶ ἡ τίτθη ἀκούσασα ἀνέκραγε, καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἔκπυστον γίγνεται.
>
> [7] Ὡς δὲ οἴκαδε εἰσέρχομαι, καταλαμβάνω τὸν Κίμωνα, καὶ οἷα ἦν εἰκὸς ἐργάζομαι, καλῶν ἀνόσιον καὶ δι' αὐτὸν ἀπολωλέναι λέγων ἡμᾶς. Ὁ δὲ οὐδὲν δι' αὐτὸ ἔδεισεν, οὐδὲ ᾐσχύνθη τοῖς πεπραγμένοις, ἀλλὰ μύθους ἐπεβάλλετο λέγειν μακρούς, τοὺς ἁπανταχόθι τροχῶν ἄξια εἰργασμένους καταριθμούμενος.
>
> [8] Καὶ γὰρ ἐν Μαγνησίᾳ ταὐτὸ τοῦτο περὶ Μαίανδρον τὸν ποταμὸν ἔφη γεγονέναι ὑπό τινος τῶν ἐκεῖ νέων, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ ἔτι σήμερον Ἄτταλον τὸν ἀθλητὴν ὁ πατήρ, ἔφη, αὐτοῦ οὐχ ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Μαιάνδρου εἶναι πείθεται, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸν οὕτω πάνυ νομίζει σαρκῶν τε καὶ ῥώμης εὖ ἔχειν· ἐπειδὰν δὲ πολλὰς λαβὼν πληγὰς καὶ ἀπειπάμενος ἐξίῃ, τὸν ποταμὸν αὐτῷ νεμεσῆσαι λέγει, ὅτι νικήσας οὐ πατέρα ἀνηγόρευεν αὐτόν. Οὐκ ἄρ' ἀπορεῖ γε ἡττώμενος προφάσεως.

[9] Καὶ περὶ Ἐπίδαμνον δ᾽ ὁμοίως πάλιν Καρίωνα ἔφη τὸν μουσικὸν ὑπ᾽ εὐηθείας πεπεῖσθαι ὅτι Ἡρακλέους εἴη τὸ ἐκ μοιχοῦ γεγονὸς αὐτῷ παιδίον. Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἐπαιδοποιησάμην, ἔφη, ἅπαξ δὲ διελέχθην παιδὶ ὑπερώρῳ τε ἤδη, καὶ λουομένην αὐτὴν μετὰ μιᾶς γραὸς ἰδών. Καὶ ἄλλως δ᾽ ἐδόκει μοι, ἔφη, ὡς μὴ πανταπασι τὰ ἐν Ἰλίῳ τραγικά τε καὶ φοβερὰ ᾖ, παίζειν δεῖν τι καὶ ἡμᾶς καὶ οἷον ἐν κωμῳδίαις περὶ τὸν Σκάμανδρον ἐργάσασθαι.

[10] Κἀγὼ μὲν ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἢ ποῖ λήξει ἡ τοσαύτη ἀναισχυντία προσμένων, λίθινος ὑπ᾽ ἀπιστίας ἐγεγόνειν· ὁ δὲ ἐῴκει καὶ τρίτην Ἀπόλλωνός μοι δοκῶ καὶ Διονύσου μοιχείαν ἐπάξειν, ἕως ἰδὼν ἐγὼ ὄχλον προσιόντα τῇ θύρᾳ, "τοῦτ᾽ ἐκεῖνο" ἔφην, "καταπρήσοντες ἡμᾶς πάρεισι", καὶ δι᾽ ὀπισθοδόμου τινὸς εὐθέως πρὸς Μελανιππίδην φεύγων ᾠχόμην, ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ἑσπέρας ἐπὶ θάλατταν, εἶτα εἰς τἄμπροσθεν. Εἶτα ἀξένῳ καὶ ὥστῃ ἀνέμῳ κατήχθημεν, ὃν μηδεὶς ἂν ἄλλως ἢ φεύγων τὸ Κιμώνειον ἄγος ὑπομεῖναι πλέων. Τοιαῦτα μὲν παθὼν δεῖν σοι γράφειν, ὡς σχετλιάσοντι καὶ ἐμοῦ μᾶλλον, ᾤμην· σὺ δὲ ἂν ἱκανῶς οἶμαι γελάσειας.[5]

[1] You can't imagine what that fellow Cimon made us go through in every town and harbor we visited, ignoring both laws and common decency. I had come to Troy, eager to see the place, including the infamous beach; but I'll keep quiet and won't write about what I saw there, since I think the topic's done to death already. If I try to copy that fancy poetry stuff, I'm afraid I'll make a fool of myself. But as for Cimon's tricks, and his utter shamelessness, even if I had a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths, I wouldn't have the strength to describe it all.

[2] After we spent several days at Troy and still hadn't had enough of gazing at the famous graves (my idea was to stay until I could see all the items mentioned in the epics and connected to the heroes), the day came when a host of Trojans were trying to arrange weddings for their daughters, at least those who were the right age. [3] There were big crowds of girls getting ready to marry. It was customary in the region of Troy for brides-to-be to go to the river Scamander, wash themselves in its waters, and say this phrase out loud, as if it were something sacred: "Scamander, take my virginity." One of the girls who came to bathe at the river was Callirhoe; she was beautiful, but from a poor family. [4] So we, together with their relatives and the rest of the crowd, were watching the festival and the girls bathing from a distance, as was appropriate for those who weren't immediate family members. But our fine fellow Cimon hides himself in a bush on the banks of the Scamander, and crowns his head with reeds; he was clearly prepared to snare poor Callirhoe, and the day provided the opportunity for his trap. [5] I found out later that she was in the river pronouncing the customary phrase, "Scamander, take my virginity," when Cimon jumped out of the bushes in his Scamander costume and said, "with pleasure! Since I am Scamander, I take and accept Callirhoe, and promise to be good to you." As soon as he said this, he grabbed the girl and

[5] Text from Martin and de Budé 1928.

disappeared. [6] But the incident didn't end there. Four days later there was a procession in honor of Aphrodite; the recently married girls participated, and we were spectators. When the new bride saw Cimon watching with me, acting for all the world as if he had done nothing wrong, she gestured toward him reverently, and turning to her chaperone, said, "Nurse, do you see Scamander there, to whom I gave my virginity?" When the nurse heard this, she gasped out loud, and the affair became public knowledge.

[7] So I go back to my quarters, grab Cimon, and give him a piece of my mind, calling him wicked, saying that we're in big trouble now because of him. But he wasn't scared at all, or ashamed of what he'd done; he made it worse by rattling off a long list of people everywhere who had committed crimes that should have been punished by torture. [8] He claimed the same thing had happened near the river Meander in Magnesia with one of the young men there, and that from that day on, the father of Attalus the athlete remained convinced that the boy wasn't his biological son, but Meander's; he thought that this explained Attalus' amazing muscles and physical strength. When the boy was finally beaten and threw in the towel, he left the games and said he thought the river was angry with him for failing to acknowledge Meander as his father before when he had been victorious. He might have been beaten in the games, but he sure wasn't at a loss for an excuse! [9] Similarly, near Epidamnus, Cimon claimed, a rather naïve musician was convinced that his child, born from his wife's adulterous affair, was really Heracles' son.

"I didn't make any babies," Cimon said. "I just had one pleasant conversation with a luscious girl I saw bathing in the river, escorted by her old slave. Anyway, it seems to me that the events at Troy aren't wholly horrible and tragic; we should look at the funny side of it all, and stage *The Scamander Story* as a comedy!" [**10**] And I, waiting only for him to stop his blaspheming, felt myself grow numb with disbelief at his outrageous behavior. But he seemed all set to embark on two more sexual adventures at the upcoming festivals of Apollo and Dionysus. Just then I noticed a mob heading toward our front door. "This is it," I said, "They're coming to get us." I ran straight out back and fled to Melanippides' house, and afterwards that evening to the shore and out to sea. But we were driven back to our host's house by a vicious wind that nobody would have dared to sail in unless he was trying to escape the Cimonian curse. After suffering all this, I thought I must write you a letter about it, since you've experienced far worse than me. I suspect you'll find my story worth at least a chuckle.[6]

As can be seen, the letter bears *prima facie* no relation to Aeschines at all; despite this, Holzberg and Mignona have both argued recently that it is part of an epistolary novel constituting it and the other eleven, very different, *Epistles* of ps.-Aeschines, and that it is supposed to relate an event

[6] Trans. Rosenmeyer 2006.

that happened to him and his friend while he was in exile.[7] This seems to me unlikely: a clear connection to the historical Aeschines who is clearly the subject of the other eleven *Epistles* is nowhere to be found within our text.[8] What we have here is a comic story of erotic (mis)adventure, told by an anonymous narrator-epistolographer, about his travelling companion, a certain Cimon (there is nothing to connect him to any particular historical Cimon). We do not have a (related) context for the story, but in fact the text we have works perfectly well as a self-contained short story, with beginning, middle, and end, and some wittily allusive and metaliterary flourishes along the way.

I intend therefore to present a reading of this text as a stand-alone piece of narrative literature, in the absence of any evidence of a longer original structure to contain it. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the text and its location buried within the corpus of pseudo-Aeschinean *Epistles*, very little attention has been given to this little story, so the issues to consider here begin with the basics of form and genre. The main focus of the chapter is on the epistolary form of this text: firstly (§ II) considering how epistolary it is, and then (§ III) asking *why* its author chose to use the epistolary form, and what implications this has for the narrative it contains.

II. The Genre of *Epistle* 10

The genre of the tenth letter raises questions, since its epistolarity is far less clearly marked than the other ps.-Aeschines *Epistles* in whose company it is found:[9] it does not even begin with an opening formula such as "Aeschines to

7 Holzberg 1994a: 17–22; Mignona 1996; Mignona 2000.

8 Indeed if Stöcker's (1980) thesis is accepted, the author intended to relate his text to a different historical Aeschines, the Socratic, not the orator (see above n.4); thus the place of this letter in the collection of ps.-Aeschines' letters would be owing only to the coincidence of names. See below, pp. 333–335, where I adopt an alternative thesis—that our author imitated that of (some of) the other *Epp.*—which explains the similarities without attempting to find absent connections between the orator Aeschines and the content of *Ep.* 10.

9 Gallé Cejudo 1996: 41–42 notes similarities with two other fictional letters, Alciphr. 1.12 and Aristaen. 1.6, and claims that our letter's belonging (partly) to the epistolary genre is demonstrated thereby, but that otherwise its genre is that of the "love story". But themes and plot elements can surely be shared by texts of several genres, and similarities with only two other literary letters—or indeed with any number—would not alone demonstrate that our short love story was meant to be epistolary (and the "love story" is found in several genres—it can hardly itself be considered a genre; indeed, he admits that the similarities might merely indicate a common *topos* of erotic literature). I will argue that formal elements need to be

so-and-so", unlike several other *Epistles* attributed to him,[10] and is on the face of it unrelated to the themes of those letters; it might therefore be seen as to all intents and purposes a short story, to which the epistolary form seems incidental. In order to consider its epistolarity of form, and any implications this form might have for reading the narrative, then, its epistolarity, and the importance thereof to the author's design, must first be established. There are, in fact, ample indicators that epistolarity is not just incidental but integral to its form, in three categories: epistolary tropes, theme, and intertextuality with other letters.

1. *Epistolary Tropes*

First at the level of epistolary tropes, *Epistle* 10 as transmitted lacks an opening formula, as noted. But even this lack is very plausibly an accident in transmission rather than a deliberate omission by the author: when letters are transmitted in manuscripts as collections, they very frequently come down to us with some or all letters lacking an opening address and/or a closing "farewell", even in collections in which some letters preserve such tropes. Editorial hands at any stage might have removed these conventional formulae to avoid repetition or to save time or space, whereas it is less likely that composers of fictional or pseudonymous letters would omit them in some letters and write them in others. If there had been an address opening *Epistle* 10 originally, it was a particularly unfortunate loss for our knowledge of this text, since it is the one letter among those attributed to Aeschines without one, and, being so different in content and tone, the addressee might well have revealed something about the fictive context for sending the letter; and perhaps even the supposed letter-writer would also have been identified as someone else (in which case the person who first inserted it into the collection for whatever reason would undoubtedly have removed this inconsistency).[11] It is also very possible that, if the letter had been composed

taken into account to secure its place in the epistolary genre, and that there are such in this text. See § III below, however, on the relevance of these other two letters. On the love letter in antiquity, see Hodkinson 2013a.

[10] Other exceptions are *Epp.* 4, 5, 8, and 9. All the others contain at least a dative of addressee, and in some cases (1, 3, 6, 7, 12) also Aeschines as sender in the nominative. We should not, however, place too much weight on the appearance or lack of opening formulae, nor their forms, as these are notoriously unstable in the transmission of ancient letters. On the alteration or omission of greeting-formulae when letters are included in collections or other texts, see further in this volume Slater (p. 212) and Kasprzyk (p. 269).

[11] Cf. Stöcker 1980: 309–311, who argues for Aeschines the Socratic as recipient of this letter and Stesimbrotos of Thasos as its supposed writer. See above, nn. 4, 8.

to fit where we find it among ps.-Aeschines' letters (see below), the author might have given it the same opening formula as the others in the collection in an attempt to make it seem part of a unified collection, and that a later editor, noticing the unlikelihood of this letter being addressed to the Athenian state, removed it. Thus an original opening formula might have supplied some lacking information pertinent to the content of the narrative or to the circumstances of its addition to the collection, but this is of course irretrievable now.

There are other epistolary tropes which our text does possess, however. One is a substitute for an epistolary formula in a form of words marking the text as a letter, as sometimes found in other literary epistles near the beginning or the end—in this case, it comes in the last sentence:[12] Τοιαῦτα μὲν παθὼν δεῖν σοι γράφειν […] ᾤμην. Rosenmeyer rightly translates "I thought I must write you a letter about it". Of course, σοι γράφειν is literally "write to you", which could potentially cover other situations, such as a literary work being dedicated or addressed *to* a friend or patron of the author for example. But γράφω with the dative is used as a standard way of referring to letter writing, not just in literary but also in real letters, from at least the second century BC; writing a work to someone in the dedicatory sense is usually γράφω πρὸς τινα.[13] This may not be decisive, but it is quite significant, especially when taken together with the other epistolary features and its transmission among letters.

Another potential indicator of epistolarity is its style and tone. The author himself indicates at the beginning what the reader should expect in these respects:

> I'll keep quiet and won't write about what I saw there [Troy], since I think the topic's done to death already. If I try to copy that fancy poetry stuff, I'm afraid I'll make a fool of myself. (§1)

That is, despite the Trojan setting, we should not expect anything epic—the playful self-referentiality of this statement as much as the statement's content confirms that we are reading an informal, unpretentious, and "low-register" narrative, when compared to other Trojan narratives the reader

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12 E.g. [Crates of Thebes] *Ep.* 10.3 (*fin.*), using the verb ἐπιστέλλω to refer to its epistolary status in the absence of a closing formula: παραινῶ σοι μὴ ὀλιγωρεῖν τῶν ἐπεσταλμένων; similar is *Ep.* 20 *fin.* (last sentence). Cf. the last sentence of Ael. *Ep.* 20: εἰ δὲ σοφώτερα ταῦτα ἐπέσταλταί σοι ἢ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγρῶν χορηγίαν, μὴ θαυμάσῃς …, which also draws attention to its epistolary form, and that of the whole book at the same time.

13 Cf. *LSJ* s.v. γράφω II 4 γ. τινί *write a letter to* one, γ. σοὶ ἵνα εἰδῇς *PGrenf.* 1. II ii 2 I (ii BC); to address a work to is γ. πρὸς τινα (LSJ II 5, e.g. Longinus 1.3).

might think of. This in itself does not point exclusively to a letter, of course; but it is one of the tenets of ancient handbooks on epistolary style that there should be nothing too fancy about the language and style of a letter.[14] See e.g. [Demetrius] *De elocutione*:

> Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ ἐπιστολικὸς χαρακτὴρ δεῖται ἰσχνότητος, καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ λέξομεν. Ἀρτέμων μὲν οὖν ὁ τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους ἀναγράψας ἐπιστολάς φησιν, ὅτι δεῖ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ διάλογόν τε γράφειν καὶ ἐπιστολάς· εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἷον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου.
>
> We will next treat of the epistolary style, since it too should be plain. Artemon, the editor of Aristotle's *Letters*, says that a letter ought to be written in the same manner as a dialogue, a letter being regarded by him as one of the two sides of a dialogue.[15]

And a little later, on the letter's more personal and less formal style and structure:

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14 NB: The dates of all the "epistolary theorists" are notoriously hard to pin down, and thus to relate securely to other epistolary texts whose authors may have known them. This problem is doubled in the case of [Aeschin.] *Epp.* generally and of *Ep.* 10 in particular, because there is no secure date for them, either; but cf. n. 1 above on this. The most likely approximate dates for the theorists mentioned in this chapter are (following Malherbe 1988: 2–6, Trapp 2003: 43–44, *qq.v.* for further references) are: Demetr. *De eloc.* as we have it is variously dated between the third century BC and the first century AD, but (if later) probably draws on sources existing no later than second century BC; Philostr. Lemn.: early third century AD; Gregory Naz. *Ep.* 51: AD 384–390; [Liban.] *Ἐπιστ. Χαρακτ*: fourth to sixth century AD. Thus the author of *Ep.* 10 could have had access to Demetr. and to Philostr. Lemn., but not to Gregory or [Liban.]. But there is substantial overlap between the few extant works of epistolary theory in Greek and Latin throughout antiquity (Cf. Malherbe 1988: 12–14), and it is consequently very likely that other lost guides to epistolary writing also contained many similar points. We need not, therefore, postulate that a literary epistolographer is looking to a specific passage in the extant epistolary theory, to suggest that he was aware of certain commonplaces in Greek instructions for letter-writing, and I do not intend to suggest our author necessarily had knowledge of specific theoretical texts or passages. But themes found only in later theoretical works were very likely also to be found in earlier epistolary guides, given the consistency of the surviving rhetorical tradition; similarly, with themes found in rhetorical works of various dates, it is worth mentioning those works which are probably later than *Ep.* 10, since more occurrences of a certain theme in epistolary theory at any time make it likely that there were several more instances in lost works.

15 *De eloc.* 223, trans. Malherbe 1988. (Mignona 2000: 92 n. 3 refers to Demetr. 223 in connection with the same passage in *Ep.*10.) Ps.-Demetrius goes on to correct Artemon's prescription, allowing a letter to be more formal than dialogue; but he concludes (235) that it should be a composite of the "graceful" and the "plain" styles, τοῦ τε χαρίεντος καὶ τοῦ ἰσχνοῦ. Cf. [Liban.] *Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες* 46–47 on the appropriately unadorned style of letters in general; for the "letter as half a conversation" idea cf. [Liban.] 2: ἐρεῖ [...] τις ἐν [ἐπιστολῇ] ὥσπερ παρὼν τις πρὸς παρόντα.

> καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἐπιστολῆς ... Τάξει μέντοι λελύσθω μᾶλλον· γελοῖον γὰρ περιοδεύειν, ὥσπερ οὐκ ἐπιστολήν, ἀλλὰ δίκην γράφοντα·
>
> In every other form of composition it is possible to discern the writer's character, but none so clearly as in the epistolary ... There should be a certain degree of freedom in the structure of a letter. It is absurd to build up periods, as if you were writing not a letter but a speech for the law-courts.[16]

An author such as ours, who is both generically conscious,[17] and self-referential about the epistolary nature of his text, will not only be aware of that fact, but may well deliberately be hinting at the prescriptions of epistolary handbooks in this passage.

A final epistolary trope of the text is its brevity—again, not an exclusively epistolary feature, of course; but brevity is another prescription of the epistolary handbooks: again see Ps.-Demetrius:

> Τὸ δὲ μέγεθος συνεστάλθω τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ λέξις. αἱ δὲ ἄγαν μακραὶ καὶ προσέτι κατὰ τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ὀγκωδέστεραι οὐ μὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπιστολαὶ γένοιντο ἄν, ἀλλὰ συγγράμματα τὸ χαίρειν ἔχοντα προσγεγραμμένον ...
>
> The length of a letter, no less than its style, should be kept within due bounds. Those that are too long, and further are rather stilted in expression, are not in sober truth letters but treatises with the heading "My dear So-and-So."[18]

Our text is evidently quite compressed as a narrative—a compression achieved by several ellipses resulting in a great economy of narrative.[19] Such

16 *De eloc.* 227, 229, trans. Malherbe 1988; cf. also 228, quoted below, referring to the mode of expression appropriate to letters; cf. also 231 περὶ ἁπλοῦ πράγματος [...] ἐν ὀνόμασιν ἁπλοῖς; 232 ὁ δὲ γνωμολογῶν καὶ προτρεπόμενος οὐ δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἔτι λαλοῦντι ἔοικεν; Philostr. *De epistulis* (text in Kayser vol. 2, 257–258 or Malherbe 1988) which concurs with the need for a simpler, more direct, and less grand style, including shorter periods; and [Liban.] 46–48, quoting this passage of Philostr. approvingly while attributing similar views also to "all the ancients" (πάντες οἱ παλαιοί).

17 Cf. Holzberg 1994a: 21–22 on the author's play with generic conventions in *Ep.* 10.

18 *De eloc.* 228, trans. Malherbe 1988. Philostr. *De epistulis* also praises brevity; Gregory Naz. *Ep.* 51.2–3 (AD 384–390) shows clearly that the demand for brevity in letters was a commonplace and was sometimes taken too far in practice, in his opinion: Ἔστι δὲ μέτρον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν, ἡ χρεία·[...] Τί γάρ; Ἦ τῇ περσικῇ σχοίνῳ μετρεῖσθαι δεῖ τὴν σοφίαν, ἢ παιδικοῖς πήχεσι ...; [Liban.] 49–50 advocates concision but clarity, i.e. the letter should only be as long as is necessary to its point, but should not sacrifice clarity in pursuit of extreme concision.

19 E.g. [5] "I found out later": the narrator elides the circumstances of the later exchange with Cimon necessary to his knowledge of events, and brings the knowledge from this later occurrence in the *histoire* forward in his *récit*; but of course in drawing attention to this ellipsis, the author shows he is conscious of the need to explain the narrator's knowledge of events during his separation from Cimon—so the narrative is both tightly constructed

gaps are not needed for any narrative or other literary reason, but they make sense if seen as part of a deliberate attempt to make the story fit the brevity appropriate to the epistolary medium.

2. *Theme*

The fact that the "letter home" relating adventures abroad is one of the most common type among pseudonymous and fictional letters in Greek, while it cannot be decisive taken alone, might be seen as an indicator of the likelihood that *Epistle* 10 was composed *as* a letter, following a common form.[20] It is of course unsurprising, given that the usual motive for letter-writing is separation,[21] most often by a long distance and for an extended period, that "adventures abroad" is one of the most frequent topics for ancient literary epistolography. *Real* letters home concerning travel overseas could, of course, fit most or all of the various specific themes named and prescribed by ancient epistolary theorists and writers of model letters, depending on what befalls both traveller and home contacts during the correspondence; but the form of a "reporting" (ἀπαγγελτική) letter given by Ps.-Libanius is surely at least a part of almost all literary letters on this theme. His sample letter begins "Many terrible things have befallen the city in which we are now living …"[22]—a promising start for a letter within an epistolary novel. Several entire collections and epistolary novels are based around the theme of overseas travel, including of course the letters of Aeschines from exile—indeed, at the level of theme this is the only real similarity between the tenth and the other letters. Other examples are the letters attributed to Plato (to Athens while he is at the court of Dionysius of Syracuse), the epistolary novels which comprise the letters of Chion (mostly letters home to his father) and of Themistocles (to various friends in Athens), and the letters of Demosthenes, similar to the other letters of ps.-Aeschines. In terms of genre,

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and economical, not merely compressed by omitting essential information. Puiggali 1988: 39 nn. 18 and 26 notes ellipses in [4] and [7]. Gallé Cejudo 1996: 40 also notes that the narrator generally gives only the minimum information sufficient for the reader to imagine what happens (i.e., for the reader to reconstruct the *histoire* from the very condensed *récit*).

20 On this *topos* cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 184–192 (*Alexander Romance*), 237–252 ("Chion" *Briefroman*); 2006: 48–55 ("Chion" and "Themistocles" *Briefromane*); see further in this volume the contribution by Gera.

21 On absence or separation as motivation for letter-writing and motif of epistolary literature, see further in this volume the Introduction (pp. 11–13), and discussions by Slater (p. 212), Repath (p. 237), Kasprzyk (p. 267), and McLarty (p. 377).

22 [Liban.] 74.

an author wanting to write a short self-contained narrative such as our text has the perfect "short story" medium ready-made, in the "letter home".

3. *Intertextuality with Other Literary Letters*

The third major indicator that epistolarity is integral to this author's project is intertextuality with other literary letters, in two directions. First, intertextuality between *Epistle* 10 and the other ps.-Aeschines *Epistles*: the tenth letter's closeness, in its use of specific phrases and of common motifs, to other *Epistles* attributed to Aeschines, has been amply demonstrated by Holzberg.[23] These similarities might have two explanations: either this letter was composed by the author of the other eleven in the collection, or it was written by a good imitator, who wanted *Epistle* 10 to be accepted as part of the collection of Aeschinean letters.[24] It is not important for my purposes here which explanation is accepted:[25] in either case, it was evidently written to be a literary letter, since its author wanted it to be read along with and as part of an existing corpus of epistolary texts, and was necessarily conscious

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23 Holzberg 1994a: 20–21, building in part on arguments made in Puiggali 1988: 37 n. 1; Salomone 1985: 233; followed by Mignona 1996: *passim*, esp. 316–317 with nn. 5–6. Holzberg and Mignona agree on a four-pronged argument: 1) *Ep*. 10 gives a structurally-motivated pause in the action of the *Briefroman*; 2) *Ep*. 10.1 follows *Ep*. 4.1 in appealing to the reader's patience; 3) a man inveigling his way into a female religious ceremony in *Ep*. 10 parallels a woman inveigling her way into the male arena of the Olympian games; 4) the narrator's flight *Ep*. 10.10 parallels the flight from Delos which begins the *Briefroman* in *Ep*.1. Holzberg adds a few verbal parallels to arguments (2) and (4). See further below, n.25.

24 There is a third possibility, of course, namely coincidence; this explanation is essential to Stöcker's 1980 hypothesis that the author was trying to pass the letter off as being addressed to a different Aeschines, not written by the orator and supposed author of the other [Aeschin.] letters. This cannot be ruled out, but I am more inclined to attribute the similarities to a deliberate imitation.

25 For what it is worth, I would propose that the text is an addition to a pre-existing collection comprising the present *Epp*. 1–9 and 11–12, because of the lack of relevance of our text to the orator Aeschines and the content of the other letters; if all twelve *Epistles* were written together as a single text, it would be a strange lapse for an author evidently capable of better to include such an obvious misfit. None of Holzberg's arguments (above, n. 23), if accepted, tell against a deliberate imitator of the other [Aeschin.] *Epp*. composing *Ep*. 10; such an author would naturally imitate phrases and motifs in the other *Epp*.; while argument (1) is unconvincingly circular, if one does not already believe *Ep*. 10 belongs to a *Briefroman* comprising *Epp*. 1–12 by a single author; and (3) is not an especially close parallel, in the absence of verbal similarities. Therefore I remain unpersuaded by Holzberg of a single author for *Epp*. 1–12, accepting only that at least some of the similarities are the result of deliberate imatition. I have relegated these arguments to footnotes since a reading of *Ep*. 10—a self-standing narrative interlude or pause within the *Briefroman* even for Holzberg and Mignona—is not substantially affected by the question.

of particular features therein in order to imitate them. The author of *Epistle* 10 on this hypothesis was seeking a medium for his short story, and hit upon the letters of ps.-Aeschines as a place in which his text could be read and transmitted. This hypothesis would make him a less skilled imitator in non-stylistic terms than he is of the style of the other letters—or else he was simply less concerned with giving his text thematic similarities to the other Aeschines *Epistles* than with getting his story a readership by inserting it into the Aeschines collection. However this may be, if it is accepted that there is a deliberate assimilation of the style and vocabulary of our letter to those of the rest of the corpus, this demonstrates among other things that the author set out to have it seen as unmistakeably an epistolary text.

There is also at least one later allusion to *Epistle* 10 which contributes to the case for its epistolarity most likely being an important part of its original conception, since it was probably read as being a fictional letter by one reader in antiquity, Aristaenetus (another composer of fictional letters). A phrase from our text, ἡ τίτθη ἀκούσασα ἀνέκραγε (6) is alluded to in Aristaenetus' *Ep.* 1.6.5, ἀνακέκραγεν ἡ γραῦς, in an exactly parallel situation.[26] Now, Aristaenetus alludes to many texts, of course, but among his favourites are several authors of fictional and literary letters like himself,[27] whom few other authors allude to. The inclusion of this text among Aristaenetus' epistolary intertexts shows that it was clear in antiquity too that it was part of a tradition of fictional literature in letter form—a tradition to which Aristaenetus sees himself as the heir.

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26 Noted in Mazal 1971: ad loc.; cf. Puiggali 1988: 39 n. 25; omitted by Drago 2007. Gallé Cejudo 1996 hypothesises an allusion to our letter in Aristaen. 1.6 and also in Alciphr. 1.12, saying that both texts recreate the scene immediately posterior to that in Aeschin. 10, though admitting that the similarity to Alciphr. 1.12 is less close. If an allusion rather than only a similarity is accepted in Alciphron (cf. n.9 above), the same argument might be made concerning Alciphron's choice of intertext—i.e. that he also alluded to Aeschin. 10 in his letter because he saw himself as writing in the same tradition of fictional letters. On the other hand, the date of Alciphron is so insecure (cf. Hunter 1983: 6–15 for a justifiably cautious summary of what can be said on the matter) that it would be impossible to rule out an allusion in the other direction, if indeed we are dealing with an allusion. For these reasons I leave this necessarily speculative point as merely a footnote.

27 Cf. Drago 2007: 36–77 on the "genealogy" of Aristaen.'s letters generally, including intertextuality with earlier epistolographers such as Aelian, Alciphron, Philostratus, and for the last two cf. passages referred to in her *index locorum*. Aristaenetus even makes Alciphron the "author" of one of his letters (1.5) and the recipient of another (1.22, from "Lucian"!), and Philostratus (1.11) and Aelian (2.1) the authors of others. On Alciphron's letters see further in this volume König's chapter and Gordon (pp. 145, 150–151), and Hodkinson 2012; on Aelian's, see Smith 2013; Hodkinson 2013b; on Philostratus, Kasprzyk this volume (p. 269); on Aristaenetus, Höschele 2012.

Just as Aristaenetus alludes to our text because of its epistolary form in order to write himself into the Greek fictional letter tradition, the author of ps.-Aeschines *Epistle* 10 wrote to be included in the Greek tradition of fictional and pseudonymous letters going back to at least the Hellenistic period; as I have argued, he did so by using the generic conventions of epistolary literature, common epistolary tropes and themes, as well as making this text conform stylistically to a particular subset of that tradition, the corpus of pseudo-Aeschinean letters.

III. Motives for and Use of the Epistolary Form in *Epistle* 10

Having established, I hope, that the epistolary form of the tenth letter was not an afterthought or incidental to its author's purpose, I now want to explore further what functions that form is serving for the author—i.e. why it was chosen as the medium for this short story, which could perhaps have been told in another form or genre—and thus also the implications of that choice for our interpretation of the text.

One possibility which might occur to readers familiar with other Greek epistolary fictions and uses of letters within literature is that the letter form serves as an authentication device or *Beglaubigungsapparat* for the fictional narrative—a means of making fictions seem more like history by the provision of documentary evidence. Holzberg, Rosenmeyer, and Ní Mheallaigh have explored this important use of epistolarity in Greek literature in pseudonymous fictional letters.[28] This is obviously part of the reason that novels and other fictional narratives often include quoted letters; but it can work for an entirely epistolary text as well, especially when the protagonist and letter-writer is a historical figure, as in the majority of Greek fictional letters, including the ps.-Aeschines *Epistles*.

However, I do not think that this is in fact an important motive for using the epistolary form in the case of *Epistle* 10. This is because there is no effort in this letter to connect the story to the historical figure of Aeschines or his known biography;[29] it is only the fact of its appearance among the other letters attributed to him which makes this connection. In the other eleven letters attributed to Aeschines, the epistolary form might be seen

[28] Holzberg 1994a: 49–50; Rosenmeyer 2001: 196–204; Ní Mheallaigh 2008 *passim*; cf. Hodkinson 2010 on Greek fictional biographies.

[29] Nor, indeed, to the biography of the historical Socratic Aeschines, if Stöcker's 1980 thesis were to be accepted.

as a *Beglaubigungsapparat* to authenticate the fictionalising biographical narrative which they contain: the alternative forms for composing a (fictionalising) biography of Aeschines in the Imperial period have the disadvantage that the reader will ask where this new information about the fourth century BC orator came from, whereas if a believable set of letters attributed to Aeschines were to "come to light", "discovered" by their actual author, the authenticity of the narrative is guaranteed by the narrator being the subject of the biography himself. But if the author of *Epistle* 10 was primarily concerned to convince readers of the plausibility of this as a letter sent by Aeschines, he could have done far more; in fact he seems to have made no attempt to do so at all. While the author *has* taken enough care to make clear the text's epistolary in form, he does not seem concerned about tying that to any *specific* epistolary context, whether that be Aeschines writing from exile as in the other ps.-Aeschines *Epistles*, or any other particular occasion.

It is for these reasons—an evidently conscious choice to use the epistolary form, but with no specific "historical" context or occasion for the letter—that I would look for motives for the author's use of the epistolary genre rather in the long and increasingly popular tradition of Greek epistolary literature, and especially in the epistolary form's common use as a medium for pseudo-historical or -biographical and other fictions. Most of the Greek epistolary collections from the Hellenistic and Roman periods are in effect historical fictions—in many cases even taking the form of early historical novels, as Holzberg's book demonstrates.[30] They take a historical figure and write a fictionalised first-person narrative based around certain events of his life—as indeed the other eleven letters attributed to Aeschines do. It is in the Imperial period, and especially from around the second century AD, the earliest likely date for the composition of *Epistle* 10, that many of these historical novels in epistolary form are written[31]—books of letters which make a clear effort at thematic and narrative coherence, and are thus closer to a novel than a collection of letters, which might come from various points in the writer's life and not be related or chronologically sequential. So

30 Holzberg 1994b.

31 The closest in form to a true *Brieffroman* are the books of letters attributed to Chion of Heraclea and to Themistocles; on these cf. Holzberg 1994a: 28–38; Rosenmeyer 1994, 2001: 231–252; Hodkinson 2007b, Hodkinson forthcoming a. But other books of letters bear several similarities to the form, e.g. the letters of [Plato] (cf. Morrison, this volume; Holzberg 1994a: 8–13), [Euripides] (cf. Poltera, this volume; Holzberg, 1994a: 13–17).

there is in fact a strong connection between epistolary form and pseudo-historical or fictional narratives: a connection which is particularly strong from around the time *Epistle* 10 was most likely written.

Despite the formal similarities noted above, the kind of fictions comprising the many "pseudonymous" Greek literary letters—which necessarily have a specific historical setting—are also in this regard rather different to ps.-Aeschines' tenth letter, which lacks a specific historical context. In this respect our text is more similar to the Greek novels (these similarities are discussed below in the following section), but also to other fictional letters, such as those of Alciphron and Aelian especially, which are similar in their creation of short, episodic prose fiction in the epistolary form as well as frequently *eros*-related themes; these, like the tenth ps.-Aeschines *Epistle*, are alluded to by Aristaenetus,[32] meaning that all these texts are seen roughly two centuries later as part of a fictional epistolary tradition, to which Aristaenetus wished his work to belong. There are also several other fictional texts from around this period for which the epistolary form was evidently *chosen* by the author, but which might have been told in other forms—the epistolary novels,[33] and the ghost story in Phlegon of Tralles,[34] for example; not to mention the appearance of letters prefacing or quoted within novels and many other fictional narratives.[35] Our text, then, at least as it comes down to us, falls somewhere between the more "purely" fictional and erotic letters mentioned recently, and the historical fictions and pseudonymous letters which constitute most Greek epistolary books, to which it is related largely by its inclusion in a book of this kind. If this inclusion is seen as accident, and the tenth *Epistle*'s similarities to the others of ps.-Aeschines as coincidence, the genre of the text would shift more towards the non-historical and erotic fictional letter. If on the other hand, as seems more likely to me, the author wanted *Epistle* 10 to resemble the ps.-Aeschines *Epistles* and to be inserted into that book, a deliberate positioning between the historical and non-historical fictional epistolary genres must be supposed.

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32 See above n. 27.

33 Above n. 31.

34 See Morgan, this volume (pp. 305–308) on Phlegon's expert integration of epistolary with narrative form.

35 As well as the Greek novels (for letters in which cf. Rosenmeyer 2001: 133–168; Létoublon 2003; Robiano 2007), cf. also the important uses of letters in the *Alexander Romance* (cf. Whitmarsh, this volume, pp. 171–174, with refs.), Dares and Dictys (cf. Merkle 1996; Ní Mheallaigh 2008), Lucian (cf. Slater and Bär, this volume), Antonius Diogenes (cf. Morgan, this volume, pp. 316–318, with refs.).

To return to the possible motives for using epistolary form: I would suggest that the choice to cast the pseudo-Aeschines 10 narrative in the form of a letter was, in part at least, influenced by the recent and contemporary popularity of the epistolary form for a great many kinds of literature, especially fictional—both pseudo-historical or fictionalising biography as in the many pseudonymous letter collections, and the more "self-contained" epistolary-fictional worlds as seen for instance in Aelian.[36] This prevalence of narratives in epistolary form in turn might be explained, in part, by the absence of any defined genre equivalent to the modern "short story": if an author wanted to write a prose narrative which was not long enough to be a novel, then the letter was the form *de rigeur*, and indeed seemingly one of the only forms available.[37] Given the similarities between the self-conscious and erotically-themed narratives of the Greek novels and our *Epistle* which will be discussed shortly below, I would suggest that the choice of form simply provides the author with a generic niche within which to write a novel in miniature.

Another reason for the choice of epistolary form, I would argue, is the special relationship that exists in much (especially Imperial) Greek epistolary literature between the letter form and "self-consciousness" or metaliterary and metafictional comment on the form, genre, style, and themes of the narrative (including showing an awareness of theoretical works on how to write letters, such as those discussed above). I have argued elsewhere for this connection, especially with regard to two roughly contemporary, sophistic, epistolary novels, comprising the letters attributed to Chion of Heraclea and to Themistocles.[38] Of course, self-consciousness and metaliterary features can occur in texts of any genre (and do so around the same time especially in the so-called "sophistic" novels, by Longus, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus), and there is no necessary reason for a greater prevalance in epistolary texts, taking the broadest definition of epistolarity. But a greater

[36] Other lost epistolary texts along the lines of Aelian and Alciphron might be posited as specific texts which might have been known to our author, if such are sought; but if our estimate of the second century AD or later for *Ep.* 10 is even close then Aelian's *floruit* of ca. AD 200 would give every possibility for our author to have read Aelian's *Epp.*; the date of Alciphron is uncertain (cf. n.26) but he is probably roughly contemporary with our author, and it is no less likely that Alciphron preceded him than *vice versa*.

[37] Cf. Morgan, this volume, pp. 319–321 for this question in relation to Phlegon's epistolary ghost-story.

[38] Hodkinson 2007b (Themistocles), forthcoming a (Chion). Cf. esp. the latter for a relevant discussion of the concept and kinds of "metafiction" and its applicability to such texts; see further Hodkinson forthcoming c.

prevalance of such features is in fact observable in Greek epistolary fictions of this period, even compared to the Greek novels (only Longus is perhaps as full of literary self-consciousness and metafiction as "Chion"), and I have argued that this is in part owing to particular, contingent features of classical epistolarity—namely the norms which prescribe that letters are more informal and conversational, so that commentary and intrusions by the letter-writer's persona are not at all out of place, but in fact rather regular and to be expected.[39]

This self-consciousness is manifested in the narrative of *Epistle* 10 through the somewhat slippery persona of the narrator, as well as through the use of the internal audience ("internal" to the fiction of the narrative-as-epistle that is, not to the narrative within the epistle), i.e. the supposed and (for us) anonymous addressee of the letter, as a figure for the external audience, the real readers of the fictional epistolary narrative. This use of narrator and construction of an audience endows the text with a narrative technique reminiscent of the Greek novels "proper" as well as the epistolary novels and other epistolary fictions. Since the tenth *Epistle*'s similarities to specific novel passages and thereby its affinity with the ancient novel genre have already been well established, I will not go over this ground at length here, but only summarise.[40] Mignona argues convincingly that the author of *Epistle* 10 knew Chariton, whose heroine is also named Callirhoe; the fact that this Callirhoe is "beautiful, but from a poor family" (παρθένος μεγάλη, πατρὸς δὲ οὐ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν, §3) is a deliberate inversion of the novelistic Callirhoe, who is from an extremely wealthy and noble family.[41] Through Chariton, Mignona argues, our author is in fact presenting the reader with an inversion of the Greek novel genre, or the "ideal romance",

[39] Cf. the Introduction to this volume (pp. 17–20), for self-consciousness or metafictional features as especially prevalent in epistolary literature in other periods too; see further Whitmarsh, this volume (p. 170).

[40] Cf. esp. Puiggali 1988, Mignona 1996, Gallé Cejudo 1996 for the fullest discussions of similarities to Greek novels.

[41] NB the pun on ἐπιφανῶν (strangely overlooked in studies of *Ep.* 10): Callirhoe's father (and therefore she) is not from an *epiphanos* or notable family; but in mythology if not in this story, Callirhoe is the name of a nymph—a daughter of Scamander! Were we reading about *that* Callirhoe, we would be dealing with a protagonist with a very notable family—and indeed one whose anticipated but not realised appearance in this story would constitute an epiphany. The description of Callirhoe's lowly birth by reference to her father, then, is very pointedly and humorously anticipating the subversion of the epiphany of the river-god Scamander by Cimon for his own baser purposes, as well as telling the reader put in mind of Scamander's daughter, "Not *that* Callirhoe!"

whose protagonists are typically young men and women of elite class.[42] The whole episode of the river taking the girl's virginity is a comic inversion of virginity tests to which Greek novel heroines are sometime subjected, sometimes involving rivers.[43] Another key affinity to Greek novels which has not specifically been mentioned in studies of *Epistle* 10 is the temporal setting: our story could be set anytime between the classical and late antique periods (if its apparent, but improbable, connection with the orator Aeschines is set aside); this vagueness of temporal setting is just like that of the Greek novels.[44] Besides the Greek novel, similarities between this letter and the far less romantic Roman novel, especially Petronius, have also frequently been pointed out.[45] This other novelistic affinity of our letter accords well with the inversion of the "ideal" romance element of the Greek novel.

There are certainly many similarities with the surviving Greek and the Roman novels, then, but those pointed out so far have concentrated primarily on thematic parallels; it is the author's sophisticated and self-conscious narrative which strikes me as both reminiscent of the novels—and indeed which make this short story a gem of a miniature in the ancient novel tradition—and as being particularly well-served by the epistolary medium of the narrative.

The first of these features is the doubling of the letter-writer—the fictionalised "Aeschines" (or "Anonymous")—as narrator and authorial figure, which allows the text to contain metaliterary comment on its form, tone, and style. The epistolary form always offers this possibility to an author, since in the persona of the supposed letter-writer there is always a ready-made figure who is reflecting on the narrative from an external perspective—including an in-built temporal remove from the events narrated, as

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42 Morgan, this volume (p. 317), argues for a very similar effect by the use of the name Charito [*sic*] in Phlegon's epistolary story: in each case, the name of Chariton or his heroine stand for the "ideal romance" genre which he represents, and gives metaliterary direction and misdirection about the genre of these short stories.

43 As argued by Puiggali 1988: 31; Mignona 1996: 322, 2000: 93 n. 7.

44 Only Chariton of the five "ideal romances" is securely set in a particular time period by sharing historical characters with Thuc.: on the dramatic times or timelessness of the novels see Kim 2008: 146–149 with further refs.

45 Cf. Puiggali 1988: 30; Konstan 1994: 122–123; Mignona 1996: 324–326, 2000: 95 n. 23. Knowledge of the Roman novels by our author would not be surprising; but equally there might be connections between each of these and the racy Greek stories known as Milesian tales (argued by Puiggali 1988: 47; Mignona 1996: 318, 324 n. 30; Gallé Cejudo 1996: 41; Stöcker 1980: 307; Stirewalt 1993: 25 with n. 74) upon which the Roman novelists are supposed to have drawn. Perhaps some of the fragmentary Greek novels, seemingly far less romantic than the fully extant texts, might also be generically connected with this letter (cf. Mignona 1996: 318 n. 11).

well as a presumed physical distance and therefore ignorance of the events and their context on the part of his addressee, thus requiring this letter-writing persona to think about how to portray the events to such an outsider.[46] In the case of *Epistle* 10, choosing a third person narrator who is a witness to the events rather than their protagonist adds further to this distancing effect (though he *was* caught up in the events, not an impassive observer, as the advancing mob in § 10 are no less a threat to him than Cimon): not just physically, but morally, the narrator (and author-figure) can distance himself from Cimon's behaviour:

> And I, waiting only for him to stop his blaspheming, felt myself grow numb with disbelief at his outrageous behavior. (§ 10)

This also allows the author to disclaim responsibility for the salacious story he is telling, since he is at two removes from it; and at the same time serves to absolve the reader's responsibility for reading such material. This strategy recalls the authorial or narrator's prefaces of some ancient novels,[47] which might serve to justify for the intellectual elite author and his readers the pleasure of reading "naughty" stories—making them cleverly constructed and sophisticated narratives rather than *merely* or primarily naughty stories. A similar effect for the narrator's persona is created by the disclaimer regarding the tone and style of the narrative in § 1, discussed above,[48] which also helps to distance the narrator (and author-figure) from his story.

Metaliterary comment comes not only in the voice of the letter-writer and his direct addresses to the recipient of the letter, but also through the voice of Cimon, who likens his adventures, and thereby this text, to a comedy:

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46 Cf. Morgan, this volume (p. 306) on Phlegon's attention to the choice of addressee and his tailoring of information contained in the letter accordingly; in that case, a distant superior requiring a dispassionate summary of events; in this, a distant friend who might feel for the writer's discomfort, but can also retrospectively treat it as entertainment (as the writer himself now does) since the temporal distance and opportunity to write implicit in the epistolary account guarantees that the writer has come out of the situation safely.

47 E.g. Longus' preface implicitly disclaims responsibility for the contents of the narrative by claiming it to be a representation of a painting (*praef.* 3), and the narrator prays that he "remain chaste while writing the story of others" (Ἡμῖν δὲ ὁ θεὸς παράσχοι σωφρονοῦσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων γράφειν, *praef.* 4), thus teasing the reader with promise of unchaste content at the same time as distancing himself from it. Cf. Ach. Tat. 1.1–2, an opening frame to the main narrative which functions as a prologue, and distances the anonymous third-person narrator from the erotic narrative by making him only an intermediary, the simultaneous narratee-narrator of Clitophon's first-person narrative; further distance is created by the sly metafictional reference to the text's fictionality through the Clitophon's admission that his narrative will be "like fiction" (μύθοις ἔοικε, 1.2.2).

48 pp. 329–330.

> Anyway, it seems to me that the events at Troy aren't wholly horrible and tragic; we should look at the funny side of it all, and stage *The Scamander Story* as a comedy! (§ 9)

This particular kind of metafiction—the comparison and alignment of a (section of a) narrative fiction with a corresponding poetic or dramatic genre to which it corresponds—is also a popular device in the ancient novel: Heliodorus' frequent Euripidean allusions are one example.[49] This device can be used also to add vividness and drama to a passage; a related and also frequent novelistic ploy shared by *Epistle* 10 is the emphasis on spectacle and the act of viewing, inviting the reader to watch and see alongside the characters.[50] Our text fits into this novelistic pattern, through its frequent repetition of words for watching, seeing, and spectating/spectacle in the parts narrating the Cimon's misadventure (§ 1: θέαν, 2 θέας, 4 ὁρᾶν, ἐθεώμεθα, 6 ἐθεώμεθα, ἰδοῦσα, ὁρᾷς, 9 ἰδών), and by emphasis on the spectacle of the procession and ritual which Cimon and the narrator observe.[51] The narrator's ethnographical interest in the customs and traditions observed near the Scamander (as distinct from Cimon's purposes in observing them) would not be out of place in one of the Greek novels; but they are also particularly appropriate to the epistolary genre, when the case in question is a letter back to Greece about customs observed during travel abroad—which indeed was motivated by the desire to see ancient monuments (§ 2: "I had come to Troy, eager to see the place, including the infamous beach.").[52] But the emphasis on viewing and spectacle, combined with Cimon's comparison of the events to a comedy, can also be seen as metafictional comment on the generic affiliations of the text, and perhaps also as self-conscious steers to the reader's emotional responses to it—as others have suggested regarding similar techniques in the Greek novels.[53] This is again both typically novelistic and typical of Greek epistolary literature—although in this instance, since the metafictional comment comes from Cimon, it is not an effect of the epistolary form that gives the author licence to comment on his text in this way.

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49 For the specific Heliodorus—Euripides intertextuality cf. Pletcher 1998, and see further n. 51 below.

50 On the importance of the idea of spectacle, including theatrical, in the ancient novel, esp. Heliodorus. and Achilles Tatius, cf. Bartsch 1989: 109–143; Morales 2004: esp. 60–77; Connors 2008.

51 As Mignona 2000: 93 n. 10 notes.

52 Cf. the geographical description in the "Themistocles" *Brieffroman* ([Themist.] *Ep.* 20.29) with Hodkinson 2007b: 274–275.

53 Cf. nn. 51 above, 54 below.

The author also includes "instructions" to the reader (via the internal authorial persona's instructions to the internal audience of the letter's addressee) on how to receive this story:

> After suffering all this, I thought I must write you a letter about it, since you've experienced far worse than me. I suspect you'll find my story worth at least a chuckle. (§ 11)

Thus on one level the author speaks over the head of his narrator and internal audience to give a steer to the readers' emotional responses to the story; and since there is an internal audience, direct reference to whom as "you" creates the ambiguity of a direct address to a reader external to the fiction, these "instructions" to the reader are very self-consciously given by the text.[54] The existence of an internal audience is often thus marked in an epistolary narrative, so that epistolary form gives the author ample opportunity and excuse to employ a reader-figure, just as the author-figure is often created in the persona of the letter-writer.

Interesting too is the way in which the moral attitudes of the narrator throughout the length of the letter, and therefore the cues he gives to the reader, are misleading and ambiguous: the disapproving narrator in §§ 1 and 10 now gives way at the end to a narrator who appears more concerned with the entertainment and humour the text will give than with its moral content. We might say that the earlier attitude of the narrator (and author-figure) has served its purpose—the distancing effect discussed immediately above—and is now replaced by an attitude which reflects more closely the feelings of the author towards his fictional narrative, namely a desire to have it read and appreciated. It must be noted, however, that the author makes this moral shift without destroying the internal logic of the fiction (i.e. in this case the coherence of the letter-writer-narrator's persona), since he justifies the narrator's apparent change of tone by introducing a new extra-narrative element to the fiction—that is, the supposed situations of his fictional letter-writer and its recipient, in the phrases "*After suffering all this* ..." and "*since you've experienced far worse than me*." We have here a kind of stoical assessment of the letter-writer's situation and that of his addressee, which serves to justify the former's decision to write and send his epistolary

[54] This kind of direction to the reader, using an internal audience (including crowds at spectactles and bystanders) which functions as a figure for the external readers, is also a common strategy of the novels; cf. e.g Winkler 1982; Fusillo 1989: 174–177; Bartsch 1989: 109–143; Schmeling 2005; Hunter 2008; Whitmarsh 2011: 189; see further references on spectacle in the novel, above n. 50.

narrative despite its dubious morality, since it is insignificant and comes as light relief compared to the apparent tribulations of the addressee. That the reader is given no more insight into what the addressee has suffered[55]—the narrator's sufferings comprise (or at least include) having to put up with Cimon's antics—is not important: it is enough, and in keeping with the economy of the narrative, for the reader to understand that more serious events have befallen the addressee; and that the letter-writer can now look back on *his* sufferings with humour and a degree of detachment, which (as argued above) is something the epistolary form is apt to provide a narrative.

IV. Conclusions

The narrative of ps.-Aeschines *Epistle* 10 is as carefully constructed and as self-reflexive as any of the sophistic novels, and also shares themes and motifs with them and with ancient novels more broadly, as has already been shown by previous studies on the text, especially those of Mignona. I have added here a few observations on this generic affinity of the text, and argued that the narrative technique as well as the several specific parallels previously pointed out contribute to this effect. But the main thrust of my argument has been that the author exploits the contemporary conventions, as well as popularity, of the epistolary genre, to excellent effect in creating a miniature (sophistic) novel, especially in the opportunities afforded the author for metafictional comment by the epistolary internal audience (the addressee), and by the ready-made author-figure and detached narrator (the letter-writer). Some of these features are shared between the ancient novel and epistolary fiction, and the similarities of our *Epistle* to both genres are important for any reading of it. Its epistolarity—wherein precisely its epistolarity lies and the importance of these features to the author's project—is the more neglected aspect in earlier studies of the text, and this chapter has aimed to integrate and reemphasise this aspect. A simple explanation for the choice of epistolary form might be the trend for fictional epistolary writing in Greek in the Imperial period, and its provision of a prose "short story" form for authors with a story such as ours to tell; but beyond this, I have argued that the epistolary features themselves are important to the tight,

[55] At least, not with the text transmitted as it is without a context for the epistolary situation and lacking an opening address. But it is not necessary to suppose that a wider context which would make sense of these closing remarks existed (though it might have done).

compact, and sophisticated narrative technique, and indeed to some of the stylistic and thematic elements of the text; the epistolary medium here is not simply a container for a story which could have been told as well in another. Finally, this narrative, standing between and connected intertextually, formally, and thematically with the novel and epistolary fictions, serves in part to highlight the importance of these genres to one another: but that is another story.

PART III

JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN EPISTOLARY NARRATIVES

LETTERS IN THE WAR BETWEEN ROME AND JUDAEA

Ryan S. Olson

Well into a seven-week battle, the Jews at Jotapata were desperate for relief from their Roman besiegers. The city the Jews defended was north of Judaea in Galilee, a region that the Jewish general Josephus had fortified before he arrived at Jotapata in the spring of AD 67 after political leaders in Jerusalem failed to answer a frantic letter seeking new military orders. Long before his epistolary summons at the dénouement of the Jotapata battle to end the siege in triumph, the Roman general Vespasian welcomed Josephus' arrival at the walled city sprawled across a spoon-shaped hill with its south-facing handle. The estimated 5,000 people from surrounding towns who sought refuge with the 2,000 residents before the siege did not seem to have over-extended its supply of corn, but their ability to withstand a long siege depended more urgently on the supply of water.[1] The city (modern day Tel Yodfat, east of Moshav Yodfat) had no subterranean source and its typical internal source, rainwater, dried up during the summer, so the Jotapatans' mental warfare tactic of pouring water over the city walls provoked another attack from Vespasian, who could scarcely believe the audacity of those who would apparently have preferred to die by sword than by dehydration. Letters requesting resources were carried by messengers to allies outside the city through a steep ravine that the Romans had ignored on the city's west side. Concealing themselves with fleeces and moving on all fours to look like dogs at night, the messengers eluded detection for some time. But as was the case with all such tactics employed by Jewish forces, success was short-lived: the Romans discovered the tactic and blocked the communication channel.

Losing the ability to communicate by letter with allies outside the besieged city hastened the siege's outcome. It was at this moment of epistolary silence that Josephus, responsible for military operations in Galilee beginning the previous year and, a decade later, author of the seven-book history of the war with Rome, said he realized the inevitable outcome of this battle. But he fought on despite the obstacles. Concluding a pre-battle speech typical of Graeco-Roman commanders, he matched words

[1] On population, Aviam 2002: 131.

with deeds and led a multi-day guerrilla campaign into the Roman camp, destroying tents and turning siege works into cinders. The Jews' determination was remarkable not only because they were overmatched, as we will see; their general Josephus also had failed in his attempt to communicate with political leaders in Jerusalem before the battle commenced, meaning that orders and priorities were unclear.[2] It was this breakdown that revealed a key difference in the institutions that comprised Judaea's culture and those that made up Rome's. Elsewhere in Josephus' works, there is not epistolary silence. In fact, Josephus embedded hundreds of letters by quotation or brief mention. In this way, Josephus' literary works have features similar to those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Diodorus, Plutarch or even, briefly, Euripides, and in some cases these authors' works might provide important intertexts for Josephus.[3] This is not surprising, as Jewish authors had already been embedding letters in texts as far back as the Hebrew Bible. But Josephus' level of sophistication when he embeds letters exceeds other Jewish texts, and even innovates upon other Greek-language ones. Adding the time dimension illustrates that Josephus is part of the epistolary tradition's growing popularity that continued into Late Antiquity. Despite the literary similarity, what is surprising is the difference between Judaea and Rome that becomes apparent when the two cultures confront each other in war. This literary similarity obscures deeper cultural differences between Judaea and Rome. The differences become evident when embedded letters are read as indicators of the cultures from which they come, as I will argue below.

In war, letters worked—from Josephus to Jerusalem's political leaders at the inception of the battle; from Josephus to Jews outside Jotapata at the initiation of tactical manoeuvring; and, after a long period without epistolary communication, from Trajan to Vespasian for the purpose of sending Titus to conclude military operations in Jotapata—as a technology that directed destinies. This epistolary technology at this time in history affected the lives of Jews and Romans,[4] the future of Josephus' career and of a Roman imperial

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[2] *B.J.* 3.140: ὁ μὲν οὖν ταῦτ' ἐπιστείλας πέμπει διὰ τάχους ἐπὶ Ἱεροσολύμων τοὺς τὰ γράμματα κομίζοντας. All Greek quotations of Josephus are from Niese 1894, vol. 6.

[3] Argued at length in Olson 2010; Josephus' level of nuance with epistolary material is not dissimilar to that described in Moles 2006: 143–148, of Plutarch's use of Greek letters in the *Brutus*. For discussions of letters embedded in fictional and historical narratives, see Costa 2001: xiv, and Trapp 2003: 33–34; narrative epistolography as a field of inquiry leapt forward with the seminal work of Rosenmeyer 2001 and Rosenmeyer 2006.

[4] A wider view of how the availability of epistolary technology affected the lives of a broad range of people, including women, is presented in chapter two of Bagnall and Cribiore 2006.

dynasty, and the very cultures that sustained meaning and order. Moreover, letters in the Jotapata battle—as elsewhere in Josephus' works—manifest the ideas, individuals and institutions that form a substantial part of the historical cultures from which they come. As manifestations of culture, letters also are by definition employed in ways aligned with the institutions they reflect. One of the best illustrations of this alignment is the use of letters during battle, when the ideas, institutions and individuals comprising culture clash and compete. Vespasian's Jotapata campaign and Josephus' vigorous counterattacks will illustrate this notion, but they will be augmented with examples from other parts of Josephus' works.

This essay will argue that Josephus occupies a place in a long line of Greek authors who embed letters in their narratives in variously sophisticated ways. Josephus' narratives thus look like those of several authors: he can produce real (historical) and narrative effects by employing letters as well as or better than any author. Indeed, Josephus' narratives and letters display effects discussed throughout this volume, as this essay will show: intertextuality, adoption of appropriate generic conventions, an inherent narrative quality (referred to sometimes as intratextual dynamics), playing to internal and external readers, a vivid tension between truthfulness and spuriousness, the interplay of physical object and content/text, and a metatextual presence. All of these are epistolary features of several Greek authors' narratives, and Josephus employs them to signal the importance of Jewish cultural contribution to a pluralistic Roman world. Josephus' war letters, however, present a problem. Those letters do not produce historical outcomes that match Josephus' literary skill. The narrative techniques of embedding letters, which appear similar to those of other authors, obscure profound cultural differences that yielded devastating effects in the lives of Jews in the southern Levant and throughout the Roman world.

Before Josephus incorporated letters into his historical narratives in the comfort of Flavian benefaction, he employed them as part of a larger tactical strategy on the battlefield. This particular dramatic battle, for Jotapata, is the end of Josephus' career as a military officer, a command that provided the autopsical view coveted among Hellenic historians, which makes the military background important for understanding the narrative letters. Indeed, to fully appreciate the use of letters here, it is important to see that the letters are part of a much larger array of savvy tactics employed by Jewish fighters in the Jotapata campaign, a battle that to Josephus' mind several years removed took the Romans longer to win than he would have expected. Despite Josephus' assertions that Roman commanders were surprised at the Jews' ability to withstand attacks, Vespasian's four-day road construction project signals

his expectation that his soldiers would face a protracted battle at Jotapata, perhaps requiring a siege, a tactic the Romans had expertly developed from the Greeks,[5] that would necessitate access to a base of operations, supply lines and the like.[6] The one-day, six-mile northward march from Gabara in May/June 67 ended on the north side of Jotapata, where the first-generation senator pitched camp for his troops, about 1.4 kilometres away. Vespasian easily captured Gabara, killed its male residents, enslaved all others, and burned its neighbouring towns. Such shock tactics were no doubt meant to reduce all potential resistors in Galilee, Judaea and Jerusalem to fearful surrender, as had been the practice throughout Roman military history from at least 146 BC when Mummius and Scipio Aemilianus reduced Corinth and Carthage, respectively, to slavery and ashes. But even the recent, devastating precedents of the thoroughness of Roman victories in Galilee did not deter those in Jotapata from colliding with the Romans. While the Roman artillery made its first volleys, the infantry began to climb the hill toward a vulnerable point in the wall. The Jews charged headlong into the Roman ranks with little hope of escape, since one line of Roman infantry remained in front of them, and as a result suffered hundreds of casualties. While Vespasian's forces built siege works from timber and stones collected nearby, the Jews rained down rocks from the walls above. While Vespasian commanded his catapults and Arab auxiliaries to fire, the Jews used the pauses between volleys to set fire to and pull apart what the Romans had built, while they also constructed screens to block missiles so they could add height to the city wall.

Before it drastically transformed the lives of Josephus and his fellow Jews, the war with Rome had begun, to name its most immediate cause, when rebels persuaded Temple leaders to stop obligatory sacrifices on behalf of Rome, captured the upper part of Jerusalem from those loyal to Rome, burned the debt records, and attacked Roman forces stationed near the palace of Agrippa II.[7] After quarrels between Jews and inhabitants of cities around the region, the *legatus* of Syria, C. Cestius Gallus, led into Galilee *legio XII Fulminata*, two thousand from the three other legions stationed in Syria (*III Gallica*, *VI Ferrata*, *X Frentensis*), ten cohorts of infantry and cavalry, and several auxiliaries.[8] He and his troops marched south along the eastern

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[5] Tacitus, *Annales* 12.45.4; improved upon Hellenic practice, Diodorus Siculus 13.2.1; Keppie 1984: 51, 99.

[6] Roth 1999: 217.

[7] On sacrifices, *B.J.* 2.409; on debt records, 2.427; on engagement with Romans and loyalists, 2.430–456.

[8] Joseph. *B.J.* 2.499–502.

Mediterranean coast, moving inland from Caesarea, capturing Galilee and camping briefly in the mountains northwest of Jerusalem. Jews from the surrounding country were in Jerusalem for a religious celebration (Gallus found the town of Lydda nearly deserted) in such great numbers that they were able to break the Roman lines, thereby forcing the cavalry and infantry on the wings to regain the advantage lost by the main lines of infantry forces. While the Romans retreated back to the northwest and the Jews back to Jerusalem, a rear line from the Jewish force pursued the Romans' retreating rearguard causing further Roman casualties. In negotiations led by Agrippa II, a successor of Herod the Great, and sanctioned by the Romans, the Jews were unable to agree on a unified course of action. The Romans took advantage of divisions among Jewish leaders, as they were able to do so often in the war, and pursued them into Jerusalem in November 66. The lateness in the campaign year probably led to Gallus' retreat, which Josephus later found especially perplexing because he asserted the Romans could have ended the conflict decisively by taking the Temple: they had captured the rest of Jerusalem after entering using the *testudo* tactic.[9] As they had done days earlier, the Jews pursued the retreating Roman ranks and over several days caused many Roman casualties. In his haste to escape, Gallus killed his pack animals, which would have slowed his speed,[10] and abandoned artillery that the Jews then collected and later employed. Some Jews pursued Gallus' forces some 75 kilometres (47 miles) northwest to Antipatris, on the Romans' way back to Caesarea. In response, Nero appointed a new *legatus* to Syria, T. Flavius Vespasianus, whose most recent combat experience had been in Britain nearly a quarter-century before his appointment to the east.[11] Realizing that the Romans would be back to take Jerusalem in the next campaign year, the Judaeans divided the territory into five other military districts, assigned a general to each—including Josephus to Galilee—built fortifications and made other preparations for war.[12]

Significantly for the study of embedded letters, it was an imperial letter that helped to trigger a war for which they were unprepared: Josephus emphasized as a leading cause of those pre-war hostilities an unsuccessful embassy to Nero to settle disputes between the Jews and Syrians. When the Jews' opponents returned to Caesarea with a letter (ἐκόμισαν γράμματα)

9 Joseph. *B.J.* 2.531; see Smallwood 1976: 297; on *testudo*, Cassius Dio 49.30.

10 Roth 1999: 204; Roth estimates 1,400 mules per legion of 4,800, cavalry and centurions (83).

11 Keppie 2000: 188–189.

12 Joseph. *B.J.* 2.562–584.

from Nero that did not favour the Jews, tensions were further fuelled, leading to a dispute over a property bordering the Jewish synagogue.[13] That conflict was mishandled and encouraged by the Roman procurator Florus, whose actions caused unrest in Jerusalem that he then used to foment more rebellion, according to Josephus, and also caused a desire among some factions to go to war. In a long speech, Agrippa II offered many reasons that the Jews ought not to pursue war with the Romans, not least among them was the current status of those who once won the most celebrated battles of classical antiquity—at Salamis, Thermopylae, Plataea—with great military might. Yet the Jews, Agrippa opined, would not have anything like those troops, armour, fleets or capital, nor would they surpass other notable people's strength, intelligence, wealth or population.[14] Josephus' Agrippa observed that these assets of military history, created in Classical Greece and passed to Macedonia, were now stewarded by the Romans and aligned against the Jews. Such resources did not mean, of course, that the Romans would not make mistakes as they had when bested by smaller forces when, for example, Augustus lost three legions in Teutoburg Forest under Varus in AD 9 or when the Republic lost thousands to Hannibal's numerically inferior force at Cannae in 216 BC.

Indeed, the notion that Josephus' words in Agrippa's speech missed is that it was the coordination of these factors—military might, capital, intellectual achievement bearing fruit in strategy and logistics—that eventually produced a Roman victory over the Jews. Josephus argued in his *Against Apion* that Jewish culture was intellectually sophisticated and yielded literary achievements that were at least among the best in antiquity. One of the benefits these achievements brought was a sophisticated and extensive use of letters, of epistolary communication, in everyday Jewish life and in Jewish literature. As military leader and literary creator, Josephus demonstrated this as well as any author of Greco-Roman antiquity as he included hundreds of letters in his works. Purporting (at least) to be from the period he narrated at any given moment and with the dust of the archives still clinging to them, these embedded letters offer a tangible connexion between the personal experience of Josephus the military general and Josephus the author. War is the commonality between Josephus' personal (historical) use of letters and his authorial use of letters. Moreover, letters provide windows on the institutions of a culture, and, in the context of war, clarify the strength of those institutions to confront another culture.

13 Joseph. *B.J.* 2.284.
14 Joseph. *B.J.* 2.361–364.

I. Josephus as Military General and as Author

Josephus appears to have wanted to show that few circumstances involving Roman provincials shaped events at the centre of the cultural and political world like those in which he was a leading figure or recorder. His big break came when he predicted, upon capture as one of the last survivors at Jotapata, that his Roman opponent would become *princeps*.[15] Lucky for Josephus, Vespasian did make a bid for the principate in 69 and acceded, perhaps emboldened by his prophetic encounter in Judaea.[16] As a result, the newly minted Roman citizen Josephus took up residence in the first-generation senator's vacated home. From Rome Josephus wrote four works in Greek: a seven-book history of the war that changed his career, a 20-book uneven summary of Jewish history from creation to AD 66, an autobiography focusing on his early education and his stint as a military officer against Rome, and a defence of Jewish culture against a Greek antagonist.[17] None appears to have been widely known until the early Christian scribes received them, especially because of the works' extra-canonical material that provided relevant historical fodder, including a much-discussed reference to Jesus. Despite this lack of wide attention from intellectuals in the Flavian period, Josephus situates his own literary style and practice in the Greek literary tradition, an approach that would have been appreciated at various levels by his Jewish, Greek, and Roman readers.[18]

In the Thucydidean and Polybian tradition, Josephus' literary approach was influenced by his extensive personal experience of war. This experience was most on display in the grave events surrounding Jotapata. In parallel, his military experience was shaped by Graeco-Roman practices, at least when he came to write about it. Certainly his self-proclaimed ingenuity in battle, his ability to innovate and adapt, as well as to emulate Roman practices, made for good historiographical fodder. Admittedly, the true contour of these traits is unknowable, and the ways in which Josephus claims to have prepared for war and to have executed his command are dubious for reason not only of his natural proclivity to self-aggrandisement but also of the

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15 Joseph. *B.J.* 4.400–408.

16 Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6.

17 These are, respectively, the (1) *Bellum Judaicum*, (2) *Antiquitates Judaicae*, (3) *Vita*, and (4) *Contra Apionem*. For background, see (1) Olson 2010: 72–74, (2) Olson 2010: 74–77, (3) Olson 2010: 77–79, and (4) Olson 2010: 79–80.

18 I argue this extensively in Olson 2010. On audience, see Olson 2010: 40–49, and Mason 2011.

important role that an arduous but victorious war played in supporting the new Flavian dynasty. However, the way in which Josephus structured his command and tactical operations to achieve, as he claimed, Rome-like order and discipline does not seem to have been responsible for the fortitude and discipline his forces did display on numerous occasions and that appear to have extended the battle of Jotapata.[19] And while civil war in Rome in 68–69 did delay the outcome of the war, documentary evidence of protracted battles and sieges, including especially Jotapata in 68 and Jerusalem in 69–70, confirm that the Romans did have some difficulty overcoming the Jews' defences.[20]

Thus, Josephus' claims to Rome-like military excellence were not without some credibility. If his account provides even a shred of truth, he and those under his command were extraordinarily inventive defending Jotapata and, indeed, emblematic of courageous military engagements of antiquity. Letters that became embedded in Josephus' narrative provide one, but not the only, example. As Vespasian built a siege ramp and it reached the wall's height, Josephus built the city's wall higher and protected the builders with an overhead screen of ox hides, which they did hastily given the Romans' speed and skill at siegecraft.[21] When cut off from provisions, the Jews fought the Romans mentally by discarding their city's existing water supply. In response to Vespasian's battering ram under cover of Roman artillery, Josephus hung bags of chaff to absorb the blows.[22] When the Romans cut the ropes holding the shock-absorbing bags, the Jews set fire to the siege works and artillery while one warrior, Eleazar of Saba, dropped a stone from the wall and broke the battering ram. Others led a charge and broke the tenth legion's line; the ongoing burning efforts caused other Roman troops to bury their equipment. Vulnerable as they were to conditions in which the Romans could most effectively use projectiles, the Jews eventually were worn down by torsion-powered engines, hurling *ballistae*, arrows, and bolts with a force and effect that Josephus found remarkable.[23] After an all-night battering, the Romans breached the wall. Vespasian sent in a formation of

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[19] On Josephus' training regimen, *B.J.* 2.577–582; on Jotapata, e.g. *B.J.* 3.266, 269. Compare to Roman training, Watson 1969: 54–74.

[20] On evidences of fortification, siege, and battle, see Aviam 2002.

[21] *B.J.* 3.171–175; see Davies 2008: 702–704 on Roman siege work construction, including at Masada, which is also discussed by Roth 1999: 318–319 on supply line logistics during sieges.

[22] *B.J.* 3.213–221.

[23] *B.J.* 3.240–247; on conditions and artillery engines, Davies 2008: 699. Thirty-five ballista stones were found scattered across the Jotapata site, as were seventy arrowheads delivered by bow and 15 larger arrowheads delivered by catapult: Aviam 2002: 128.

three lines of fully armoured cavalry, followed by the best infantry, hemmed in from the rear by archers and artillery. Ladders were used to scale other parts of the wall in an attempt to draw defences away from the breach against which Vespasian's formation was directed. The two Jewish divisions engaged the Romans in hand-to-hand combat on the Roman bridges. When the Romans formed up in *testudo* position, Josephus ordered hot oil poured on them from the wall above, which had disastrous consequences when it flowed behind their body armour. The armour would have been difficult to remove,[24] so the scalding tactic had its intended effect of breaking the Roman lines. Vespasian responded by raising the siege works and constructing three fifty-foot towers to give the light artillery access to thwart any further countermeasures that might be launched from Jotapata's walls; on the forty-seventh day of the battle the works reached above the wall, and the city was captured in July 67, eventually claiming the lives of thousands of Jews.[25] Though he could not overcome the Romans' resources, strategy, or engineering, Josephus proved more resourceful than any of his comrades: after the city was lost he survived a suicide pact and surrendered himself to Vespasian as a divine emissary with an imperial prophecy. It was a tactic that earned him not only his life but also a literary career, one which he then had to navigate as a Jew operating from the centre of Roman power in a Graeco-Roman cultural milieu.

Flaunting his first-hand experience of the war about which he wrote was one of the many ways in which Josephus emulated Greek conventions as one might expect of a historian writing Greek. Additionally, he wrote a Hellenic historiographical prologue, "quoted" characters' speeches, appealed to truth, explicitly criticised previous or contemporary historians' work, used important historiographical vocabulary, embellished biographies in Hellenistic fashion, digressed for geographic or ethnographic details, wrote an autobiography, included tropes from tragedy, and the like.[26] The antiquity of Judaean culture, he also claimed, was greater than that of even the Greeks. In this vein, Josephus also extensively used embedded letters, epistolographic material, in his narratives but did so even more extensively than previous Greek historians.

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24 Davies 2008: 700–701.

25 On casualties, from battle and related causes, Aviam 2002: 131.

26 On Greek *prologoi*, Joseph. *B.J.* 1.6–7, Thuc. 1.21.1, Polybius 1.4.3–11, Diodorus 1.1.1 and 1.3.1–4, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.6.1–3; on autopsy, Joseph. *B.J.* 1.18 and Thuc. 1.22.2; on speeches, Landau 2003: 131–137 and Mason 2011 (Josephus), Pelling 2000: 114–122; Laird 1999: 143–157.

When embedding letters, Josephus reflected common Greek literary convention and practice, but innovated upon it by amalgamating epistolary approaches from other genres, including tragedy, and refracted Greek uses of letters through a Jewish lens in an attempt to ensure the survival of Jewish culture in the Roman world.[27] He embedded letters extensively in all of his works but his last, *Against Apion*; the exception is not surprising given that work's format as a quasi-philosophical treatise. Letters are carried over and in some cases expanded from the Hebrew Bible, usually from its third-century BC Greek translations, known collectively as the Septuagint (LXX).[28] In part following his source for certain periods—the historian and Augustan biographer Nicolaus of Damascus—Josephus embedded many letters in his narratives about Herod the Great, where they provide dramatic material and detail to characterise various figures in the Herodian court.[29] They are used generally to advance action in narratives, as well as to develop and to illustrate foreign relationships in the Hasmonean and Roman periods.[30] Letters also serve as evidence that is used in some instances by figures within a historical event to persuade other characters, and in other instances is used by Josephus at the meta-textual level to appeal directly to the reader.

II. Letters at Jotapata

In the third book of his *Jewish War*, Josephus contends with several personal issues; as at other points in his private and public life, a letter figures prominently here. Because of the privileged position he ultimately assumed at the heart of Roman power in the household of Vespasian, Josephus had to grapple with the question of loyalty. Had he traded in his military responsibility to Judaea for Roman citizenship? Not if he had fought as vigorously against Rome as he had at Jotapata, nor if he was wisely submitting to the inevitable course of events. Indeed, Josephus said he preferred to die many times rather than betray his country and his command (τεθνάναι μᾶλλον εἵλετο πολλάκις ἢ

[27] This is the argument of Olson 2010, which there is not space here to reproduce. There military letters did not receive enough attention, which this essay aims to correct.

[28] Olson 2010: 129–140 for a worked example, Joseph. *A.J.* 11.21–28.

[29] See, e.g. Joseph. *B.J.* 1.528–529 and *A.J.* 16.317–319; *B.J.* 1.620, 633 and *A.J.* 17.93, 104; *B.J.* 2.23–25 and *A.J.* 17.227–229.

[30] See, e.g. Joseph. *A.J.* 7.66 (LXX 4 Reg. 20:12, MT 2 Ki. 20:12); *A.J.* 13.45, 12.415, 16.290 (from Augustus to Herod), and 19.326–327 (from Claudius to Agrippa); for the use of letters to advance narrative, see Jost 1966: 406 on 18th-century letters, and the Introduction to this volume (pp. 12–13).

καταπροδοὺς τὴν πατρίδα καὶ τὴν ἐμπιστευθεῖσαν αὐτῷ στρατηγίαν ὑβρίσας εὐτυχεῖν παρ' οἷς πολεμήσων ἐπέμφθη).[31] So it was that he went to Jotapata, but only after requesting, by letter, direction from political leaders in Jerusalem. The verb used here to indicate epistolary communication, γράφω, is common in Josephus and other Greek authors. Without quotation, the letter is presented as a thought narrative. That the thought narrative is epistolary throughout the sections is clear because Josephus asks his addressees to reply (ἀντιγράφω), and then concludes with the action of sending. This points to the inherently narrative nature of embedded letters, such that the boundary between epistolary material and main narrative can be obscure,[32] as well as to the similarity between oral and epistolary modes of communication since one might well imagine Josephus' content being delivered verbally.[33]

A reply from Jerusalem never arrives, which might be attributed to Josephus' inability to receive a reply as he became swept up in defending Jotapata; or to political turmoil in Jerusalem; or to his letter's failure to reach Jerusalem; or to the reply-bearer's being waylaid by Roman besiegers. Though certainty is impossible, the latter two options are the most likely in view of the epistolary silence that soon shrouds all Jewish operations in Jotapata. Doubts regarding messengers are not an unusual theme in Josephus.[34] Even a letter from the Roman *princeps* was at the mercy of messengers: Gaius' letter ordering that his image be installed in the Jerusalem Temple was delayed and then overtaken by a letter announcing Gaius' death that nullified the first letter.[35] In a trial scene, Herod the Great is presented as an unreliable deliverer of a letter.[36] Letters could of course close spatial and temporal gaps in the idealized ways found in Xenophon's account of Cyrus'

31 Joseph. *B.J.* 3.137. Translations and paraphrases are the author's own unless otherwise noted.

32 Some twentieth-century scholars have taken nearly all of literature to be "epistolary" in some way, since the boundary between epistolary communication and literature is vague and porous; see Derrida 1987: 48; on the boundary between the letter and other genres, Gibson and Morrison 2007.

33 See Olson 2010: 57–63 and, in a discussion of the epistolary novel attributed to Themistocles, Hodkinson 2007: 266–271; on epistolarity and orality see further in this volume Bowie (pp. 80–82), Gera (pp. 86–87), and Kasprzyk (pp. 272–274 and 287).

34 The risk of messengers being waylaid and letters intercepted is a preoccupation of Greek historiographical narrative where epistolarity is concerned: see further in this volume Bowie on Herodotus (p. 74) and Gera on Xenophon (pp. 85, 89–90).

35 Joseph. *B.J.* 2.184–203; *A.J.* 18.263–302.

36 Joseph. *A.J.* 16.361–369, *B.J.* 1.538–543; see commentary in Olson 2010: 163–164.

imperial administration,[37] but Josephus observed a pragmatic fact of risk known also to Thucydides, in whose work Nicias knew the contingencies of epistolary communication.[38]

The fact that Josephus dedicated several lines to narrating his letter writing activity and then received no reply redounds to a larger narrative theme, his personal need in the *Bellum* to demonstrate that he undertook heroic efforts on Judaea's behalf. Despite not receiving the orders he requested by letter, he charged courageously into battle against all odds. The rest of the account details the extraordinary efforts in which he led his troops. Thus, the first Jotapata letter is carefully integrated with the surrounding narrative; that is, the embedded letter is intratextual.

This intratextuality—texts within the whole text that closely relate to the whole—is a key feature in Josephus' use of embedded letters throughout his narratives. For example, when he introduced a letter that presented an unfavourable decision regarding the future of the Jews in exile, Josephus characterized the Achaemenid despot Cambyses as φύσει πονηρὸς ὤν.[39] In contrast, that letter's contents presented details dissonant with the overall message Josephus was attempting to convey in the *Antiquitates*: that Jewish foreign relations had always been favourable. Rather than change the epistolary contents, Josephus appears to have followed Herodotus in impugning Cambyses' morality, thus showing him to be plausibly out-of-step with other rulers' policies toward the Jews.[40] In *Antiquitates* 14 and 16 Josephus embeds letters and other documents as evidence of positive relations between Jews and Romans. That the insertions do not always substantiate Josephus' theme has puzzled some commentators. The apparent misfit need not be too vexing, however, if the letters are seen not so much as foreign insertions but as embedded documents whose authentic archival quality—Roman names, provenances, material descriptions—add heft to the overall narrative point that good rulers have had good relations with the Jews, despite significant differences between them.[41] The documentary qualities of letters exhibited in *Antiquitates* 14 and 16 create an expectation of authenticity. Narrating the actions of writing and sending, as does the account of the first Jotapata letter,[42] creates a similar effect. Such details

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37 Xen. *Cyr*. 8.6.17–18; cf. Herodotus 8.98. On epistolarity in Xenophon, see Gera's chapter in this volume.

38 Thuc. 7.8.2.

39 Joseph. *A.J.* 11.26.

40 For a full discussion, Olson 2010: 139–140.

41 Olson 2010: 200–204.

42 *B.J.* 3.138–140.

make it difficult to deny that such a material letter existed and, moreover, draw more attention to the letter. And such authenticity was important to Josephus' need to demonstrate his loyalty to the Jews, even though the battle would occasion his apparent defection.

The second letter in the Jotapata account is also important from micro-(battle) and macro-level (textual) perspectives. To communicate with Jews outside Jotapata, Josephus sent letters (γράμματα) with messengers travelling at night, and the messengers dressed so that they might be mistaken for dogs (φαντασίαν παρέχοιεν κυνῶν) to escape detection through an unguarded gully. This worked successfully: Josephus received (παρ' αὐτῶν ἐλάμβανεν) responses from them and was able to stock the city with needed supplies (παντός ἐπιτηδείου).[43] However, the Romans who were blockading Jotapata eventually perceived the deceit (συναισθόμενοι τὴν ἐπίνοιαν) and stopped the ravine (περιίσχουσιν τὴν χαράδραν).[44] This event, unfortunate for the defenders of Jotapata, ended epistolary communication and required them to undertake desperate measures, without adequate supplies, to resist Roman conquest.

The inability to exchange letters with supporters outside Jotapata—an epistolary silence—highlights a weakness of this technology that was well known in Greek literature. Epistolary communication could often be unreliable, susceptible to the universal vagaries of human error and weakness. Iphigenia, stuck in Tauris, was for years unable to send her letter that languished in the temple, and then, when "messengers" did arrive, she communicated her message both orally and on a δέλτος to ensure its safe arrival one way or the other.[45] Similarly in Thucydides, Nicias believed he needed to record his letter on material so that he could overcome the potential failures of messengers due to inarticulacy, forgetfulness or flattery of their audience.[46] Though not directly relevant here, forgery represents a different class of the same potential weakness of epistolary communication.[47]

Despite their ability to create vulnerabilities in epistolary communication, messengers in a narrative often physically illustrate the reality of an event. Messengers in Josephus and other Greek authors often performed their epistolary message. They could do this by simply articulating the

43 Joseph. *B.J.* 3.191. This is one of Josephus' most interesting uses of messengers, which can be compared with others discussed by Head 2009, Heszer 2010 and Olson 2010: 91–97.

44 Joseph. *B.J.* 3.192.

45 Euripides *I.T.* 578–597, 755–764.

46 Thucydides 7.8.2.

47 Olson 2010: 169–183.

letter's content or by dramatizing it with their bodies. In some narratives this was very obvious: C. Popilius delivered a message to Antiochus IV Epiphanes from the Roman senate. To challenge Antiochus' nonchalant response to the senate's ultimatum, Popilius drew a circle around the Seleucid ruler and demanded compliance before Antiochus left the circle.[48] Popilius illustrated the message clearly. In a different context, church officials in Jerusalem sent a letter to Christians in Antioch with four people—including Paul of Tarsus—two of whom, Judas and Silas, were named as messengers. Judas and Silas delivered the letter, communicated the content and enacted the message by encouraging and strengthening the church in Antioch.[49] In the case of the second Jotapata letter, the blocked messengers reflect the frustrated ambition of Josephus and his troops, the residents of Jotapata, and the Jews in general. The Jews, Josephus observed early in Book Three, did not possess the experience, appropriate battle units or equipment, nor much more than actions directed not by "policy" (βουλῇ) but by "passion" (θυμῷ).[50] Josephus' estimation was that this emotional quality, named with other terms elsewhere, drove the Jewish troops at Jotapata to such extraordinary lengths despite being outmatched. Once blocked, the messengers illustrate the closing of options and hope for those under Josephus' leadership. Seeing the reality of epistolary silence, Josephus began to realise the bleak prospects for the battle and made plans to escape.[51]

This epistolary silence that descended upon the rest of the battle remained until Roman communication near end of battle requested that Vespasian do the honours of ending the siege. The messenger (ἀγγέλους[52]) was sent (στείλας) by Trajan to his father Vespasian. Trajan requested that Vespasian send Vespasian's son Titus to finish the battle (ἐπιθήσοντα τῇ νίκῃ τέλος). In response, Vespasian sent with Titus five hundred cavalry and one thousand infantry to complete the conquering of Jotapata. This message brought about the end of the battle and the razing of the city.[53] Here Josephus does not use a term for an epistolary document, which may appear

48 Joseph., *A.J.* 12.244–251; Plb. 29.27; Plut. Moralia 202f–203a. For discussion, see Olson 2010: 91–96.

49 Acts 15:23–33. On Christian epistolography see further McLarty's contribution to this volume; see also Gordon's chapter for Epicurean letters as circulating among and maintaining a distinct community.

50 Joseph. *B.J.* 3.15.

51 *B.J.* 3.192–193.

52 The plural may be used just as γράμματα is used; it parallels LXX 2 Reg. 12:26, which carries the plural over from the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible (see below).

53 *B.J.* 3.299–339.

odd because of the number of letters found elsewhere in his works. However, the account is similar to a battle scene from Jewish history, recorded in the Septuagint and Hebrew Bible. The Israelite king David's general Joab sends for David to bring troops to finish the battle with the Ammonites. After he had control of Rabbah's citadel, Joab sent messengers to David (ἀπέστειλεν … ἀγγέλους πρὸς Δαυιδ; cf. Heb. מַלְאָכִים אֶל-דָּוִד),[54] who mustered troops and captured Rabbah. Joab's concern was that if he took Rabbah, he would receive the credit in place of David. Trajan may well have had the same concern, though Josephus did not say so.

As the comparanda above suggest, Josephus related his own work and that of other Jewish sources to Greek literary culture in this way as a signal of the cultural sophistication and even of the Jews' cultural superiority. In this light, the Roman state would suffer terrible loss if it dispensed with Jewish literary production. This strategy makes sense given the relatively recent sacking of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple, which was used by the Flavian dynasty as propagandistic material on imperial coinage and on a permanent fixture of the Roman forum, the Arch of Titus. To wit, not all of the Jewish treasures were deposited in AD 75 in Vespasian's *Templum Pacis*, for Jews in Judaea and in the Diaspora had many others to offer to a pluralistic Roman world, a diverse set of peoples living under one ruler, the Roman *princeps*.[55]

Thus, embedding letters in historical or autobiographical narratives was more than a linguistic or literary game for an author's amusement, an exercise that might be disconnected from intentionality and meaning. Rather, embedded letters manifested the ideas, institutions, and networks that comprised the cultures from which they emanated. Put simply, embedded letters tell readers something about the historical cultural features to which they allude. Culture is variously defined, but one eminent sociologist articulated a view held by many scholars that culture involves a set of dialectical relationships among ideas, institutions, and individuals. Each of the three types influences the others, but institutions have much greater power than individuals or ideas. Individuals must be understood within the "institutions that form them and frame all of their activity," while ideas cannot be understood without also understanding the "power of the institutions in which [they] are generated and managed."[56]

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54 LXX 2 Reg. 12:26; MT 2 Reg. 12:26.
55 Goodman 2007: 156–160.
56 Hunter 2010: 35, 34.

III. Letters as Cultural Artefacts Illustrate Significant Differences

Josephus demonstrates the notion that letters as species of material culture manifest many of the ideas, institutions, and networks that comprise a culture. That is, in Josephus letters reflect the deep structures of culture rather than displaying only superficial linguistic or literary games or playfulness. Thus, letters in a text that appear to reflect phenomena similar to other cultures should in fact be taken in the context of the culture they represent. Letters emerging from different cultures indicate ideas and institutions that may be strikingly divergent despite similar epistolary and literary forms and conventions. Though Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* and *Vita* employ epistolary material in ways that are strikingly similar to other Greek literature, the ideas and institutions of Julio-Claudian and Flavian Rome were different from those of Judaea. This could be demonstrated using many examples, such as varieties of Jewish religion,[57] political economy,[58] conceptions of history and future,[59] lifestyles,[60] and the like, though this does not imply that the cultures were on a collision course. But nowhere are differences more evident than in warfare, where letters could be an important tool whose literary record reveals ideas, practices, and institutions surrounding Roman and Judaean military operations.

How similar are the cultures, particularly the military institutions, revealed in the embedded letters? The war between Rome and Judaea dragged on after its commencement in AD 66 much longer than might otherwise have been expected, not because the Jews could not be merciless in battle or because they were not determined,[61] but largely because of the Roman civil war precipitated by Nero's suicide in AD 68. Vespasian made a bid for and acceded to the principate. As a first generation senator who had earned no military distinctions,[62] Vespasian tapped his son Titus to finish the Judaean campaign. The need of Vespasian's fledgling dynasty for a military success raised the urgent need for victory, which was eventually secured in 70 when Titus captured Jerusalem, razed the Temple, and hustled the Temple's wealth and Judaean aristocratic captives to Rome for a much-needed triumph.

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57 Beard, North and Price 1998: 1.221–223.

58 Goodman 1987: 109–133.

59 Goodman 2007: 181–204.

60 Goodman 2007: 286–317.

61 On the idea of war in Jewish literature, see Goodman 2007: 332–344.

62 Keppie 2000: 189.

Josephus no doubt admired the Roman military's discipline, training, and logistics. Most studies of ancient military history cite Josephus' observations of the Roman army in preparation, camp and action. "Their exercises do not at all fall short of the vigour of actual battle, but each soldier trains daily with all zeal just as in war."[63] Josephus marvelled at their sophisticated commands and their disciplined compliance.[64] He praised the Romans' strategy—"In battle nothing is done unadvisedly or left to chance"[65]—and revered their mode of engagement: "As a result of which they sustain battles most nimbly: for neither indiscipline scatters them from their customary battle-order, nor fear excites them, nor toil drains them … One would not err saying that their drills are battles without blood and their battles are bloody drills."[66]

Josephus' encomium was probably influenced by Polybius' account of the legions of the Roman republic,[67] and *disciplina militaris*, widely considered the asset on which the empire reposed,[68] had in general probably relaxed or at least was variable after Augustus.[69] Josephus also must have been inclined, writing as he does under the shadow of imperial favour, to idealize the valour and achievements of the Roman military. These biases should be taken into account when considering his descriptions of military operations, including the institutions and ideas conveyed by embedded letters. The biases do not, however, detract from the more bountiful capital nor the Roman army's far more advanced technology, rigorous tactical training, and discipline under Vespasian. Though Vespasian's son Titus, too, may have been exceptional, it is nonetheless relevant that Titus punished with death a member of his cavalry who had lost his horse, and that he dishonourably discharged a soldier who had been captured and had escaped alive.[70] Thus, Josephus' report is probably a reliable guideline for the Roman military during this period, if it is used cautiously.

The differences between Rome and Judaea in terms of these military institutions, strategy, technology, training, mode of engagement, and capital proved decisive in the war, despite the similarity of the situations that prompted the use of the same communications technology, the similarity of the circumstances in which letters were used, and the similarity of the

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63 *B.J.* 3.73.
64 *B.J.* 3.88, 105.
65 *B.J.* 3.98.
66 *B.J.* 3.74–75.
67 Polyb. 6.19–42; see Keppie 1984: 33–40 for a discussion of Polybius' account.
68 E.g. Val. Max. 2.7 *init.*
69 Campbell 1984: 300–311; as a mid-second century example from Syria, see Fronto, *Ep.* 21.
70 *B.J.* 6.155, 6.362; Campbell 1984: 305.

content conveyed by the letters themselves—fewer from the Roman side than from the Judaean. Unlike other sections of Josephus' works, most of the letters written, sent and received during the Jewish war were reported or briefly summarized, rather than quoted in direct speech or summarized at length. In addition to those from Book Three discussed already, the war letters appear in Books Two through Book Seven of the *Bellum Judaicum* and in the *Vita*. They were primarily intended to seek or give direction. Seeking direction was more common for Jewish letters. At a few points in his narratives Josephus wrote to leaders in Jerusalem to receive instructions and to request support to carry out those directions: when he first arrived in Galilee, from Tiberias he wrote (γράφω) and apparently received a relatively immediate but vague reply.[71] On another occasion, Josephus wrote a letter he quoted in *oratio recta*, to Jerusalem leaders seeking a letter that directed him to stay in Galilee and ordered his opponents to withdraw.[72] Similarly, Vespasian sent Titus to receive instructions in writing from Galba, who became emperor after Nero in 69.[73] He never received them because Otho became emperor during Titus' transit to Rome, and Vespasian re-evaluated his decision. The first Jotapata letter falls precisely in this category.[74] But that letter misfires, so the military command structure breaks down and, ultimately, the Jews are left without resources or clear orders.

More often, Roman letters in Josephus' narratives were sent to give instructions. Significantly, a letter is involved in what Josephus considered the *casus belli*, when Nero sent a letter (γράμματα) back with the Syrians[75] from Caesarea to communicate that he had turned over the city's governance to the Syrians, which led to further unrest over a property adjacent to the synagogue there.[76] When he began his bid for the principate in 69, Vespasian wrote to the *legatus* in Egypt to secure his loyalty and that of his troops, which were vital for Vespasian's success. T. Alexander read the letter aloud to the troops and administered an oath of loyalty to Vespasian.[77] During the build up to the Jerusalem campaign, Titus sent instructions to the tenth legion and fifth legion to join him in his march from Caesarea

71 Joseph. *Vit.* 62.
72 Joseph. *Vit.* 267.
73 *B.J.* 4.498.
74 Joseph. *B.J.* 3.138–141; see above.
75 *B.J.* 2.284, but cf. 266–270, where Josephus called them "Syrians"; the name in 284 is probably a mistake.
76 *B.J.* 2.284–296.
77 *B.J.* 4.616–618; cf. 5.46.

to Jerusalem.[78] The third Jotapata letter can be understood as serving this function, illustrating the Roman military institution working as designed—available at the time and with the force needed.

Many of the war letters were used for intrigue and internal political purposes. Most of these appeared on the Jewish side, and they comprise the bulk of the letters, and indeed much of the text, of the *Vita*. Josephus' primary foe while he was preparing for war in Galilee was John of Gischala, and it was with John, about John, or as a result of John that many of the letters were exchanged. For example, John requested passage to use the hot baths in Tiberias, a town loyal to Josephus, with the purpose of convincing the residents to revolt from Josephus. Josephus sent letters on John's behalf to allow him respite in Tiberias. However, Josephus received a letter revealing John's intention, rushed to Tiberias to intervene, and put down John's insurrection with the result that John began intriguing with leaders in Jerusalem to undermine Josephus' command.[79] The Jerusalem ruling party eventually coordinated with John in a plot, suggesting to him that he be ready to take advantage of their work to undermine Josephus, but Josephus was able to outmanoeuvre this plot based on a letter from his father who had learned about it from a friend of Josephus who had been at the meeting where the ploy was planned.[80] The intrigue involved a letter, presented in *oratio recta*, from a Jerusalem emissary, Jonathan, who had arrived in Galilee; the letter feigned support for Josephus and requested that he present himself for a meeting. Josephus opened and read the letter unnoticed, then offered the military messenger funds for travelling expenses and a drink. Once intoxicated, the messenger told Josephus of the plot, and Josephus sent him back to Jonathan with his own letter, also quoted directly, requesting that he visit Josephus, to which Jonathan replied in a quoted letter that Josephus should report in three days to make his case against John.[81] This leads to further episodes in which letters are used as evidence of betrayal, recrimination, and unrest.[82] A Jerusalemite, Castor, pretending to surrender to Titus convinced the Roman general to delay the Roman attack until he had safely met Titus. Castor's co-conspirators resisted even more obviously, so Castor sent to the rebel leader Simon telling them he could delay the Romans a while

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78 *B.J.* 5.40–42.

79 *B.J.* 2.614–631; *Vit.* 84–96.

80 *Vit.* 189–207.

81 *Vit.* 216–230.

82 *Vit.* 104–106, 229, 235, 236, 237, 240, 245, 254, 260–261 (two letters read aloud as evidence), 267, 269, 271, 272, 285–287, 292, 312, 313, and 319–321.

longer while a defence strategy was devised.[83] Letters of intrigue like these are characteristic of the *Vita* and echo Book 1 of the *Bellum Judaicum*, where Herod the Great, his family, and associates exchange, intercept, write, and read many such letters, with correspondents who often include Augustus and his legates.

While most of the war letters of intrigue involved the Jewish side, Vespasian apparently knew how to use such a device to his own advantage: he benefited from a copy of a letter that purported to be (*exemplar epistulae verae sive falsae*) from Otho to Vespasian that posthumously secured the loyalty of the legions under Otho's command.[84] That Vespasian was responsible for writing and distributing the letter is nearly certain.[85]

Other war letters do not intrigue or have to do with seeking or giving direction, but share information or make requests that do not appear to be within the military chain of command. These are fairly diverse. For example, Josephus embedded two quoted letters as a sample out of 62 letters from Agrippa that attested the veracity of Josephus' account of the war; presented at a meta-textual level to the reader as evidence, these letters are extra-episodic, related to the war's retelling rather than having been involved in the battles.[86] Episodic letters requesting assistance also were used: the residents of Sepphoris wrote to the *legatus* in Syria to give up their city; the residents of Tiberias sent a similar epistolary petition to Agrippa; the Gamalans request support from Josephus against Agrippa.[87] Josephus, too, directed by letter that resources be provided when he sneaked letters through an unwatched area of the Roman cordon around Jotapata, the second epistolary episode of the Jotapata battle, as discussed above.[88]

The implications of these letters are significant but not surprising. The function of letters is usually to carry messages from one party to another. In most Roman war letters, the message is from the centre to the periphery, from the leading general to a *legatus legionis*. This points to the Roman military's centralized command structure, and reflects the discipline of the Roman troops that Josephus so greatly admired and desired to emulate. Such discipline would seem to have been necessary to control the roughly 250,000 men serving in a Roman military capacity of some kind by the time

83 *Vit.* 317–330.
84 Suet. *Vesp.* 6.4.
85 Ferrill 1965: 268.
86 Joseph. *Vit.* 364–366. On episodic and extra-episodic letters, Olson 2010: 175–204.
87 Sepphoris: *Vit.* 373–374; Tiberias: *Vit.* 155, 381–382; Gamala: *Vit.* 186.
88 *B.J.* 3.191.

of Vespasian's principate, especially with many of them idle.[89] Extensive evidence indicates the organization of a legion—5,000 to 6,000 men divided into ten *cohortes* containing an additional division of six centuries with ten squads of eight men each—and of an auxiliary unit, the hierarchy of command, and the loyalty engendered by ambition to climb ranks and earn glory, as well as by pay and other privileges in service and retirement.[90] This can be contrasted with Jewish organization and command revealed in the war letters and described above. Epistolary requests came from outlying cities or commands and were made to central leadership, which was then responsive or not, rather than in the opposite direction. The disparate Jewish forces, at least the ones under Josephus, aspired to such order and structure, and fell short,[91] but not of course without the significant accomplishment, in part their own, of delaying the Romans with a four-year war.[92] The first Jotapata letter, Josephus' attempted correspondence with Jerusalem, reflects this unfulfilled aspiration.

The centralised structure and centre-out nature of epistolary communications no doubt reflect the significant capital, human and other, available to the Roman state for such situations. Rather than responding to requests to shore up weak or non-existent defences, Roman commanders were guiding the assets they already had in place and determining how to apply their resources to the changing battle circumstances they faced in the southern Levant. Such enormous amounts of capital strategically situated at potentially volatile frontier points meant that mistakes could be, and were, recovered from much more quickly and at a much greater cost to opponents. Though the Jotapata siege took several weeks, the Romans had the resources to continue applying. Those resources were delivered based on a well-rehearsed strategy that included the construction of a road built in only four days. Included among those resources were not only legions and

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89 Goodman 1997: 82.

90 On organization, Keppie 1984: 173–190, Breeze 1969, Davies 2008: 693–694, Watson 1969: 13–30; on *auxilia*, Roth 1999: 335–339; on promotion and its limits, Campbell 1984: 319–362; on privileges and rewards such as donatives and *diplomata*, Campbell 1984: 165–171, 182–189, 439–445, e.g. CIL 16.12 (diploma from Vespasian), and Watson 1969: 147–153; on pay in general, Alston 1994.

91 Contrast this with the Romans' adoption or adaptation of technology, training and tactics used by others; see Saddington 2009: 83. On the presence of architects, surveyors and technologists in the army, see Watson 1969: 144.

92 Goodman 2007: 339–344; Joseph. *B.J.* 2.577–579, 3.109. This delay may not have been unique in the Roman Near East; decades later, the Nabataeans appear to have resisted Roman troops, but the duration is unknown: Parker 2009: 144–145.

auxilia camped nearby with their full gear and supplies, but also artillery, horses, pack animals, and the wherewithal to collect timber and stones to build extensive siege works and produce ammunition small and large. As Josephus emphasised more than once, it was only a matter of time before Jewish forces were utterly overwhelmed by this institution. And when the victory was at hand, a Roman commander in the field, Trajan, sent word to Vespasian seemingly as a courtesy.

Furthermore, Jewish war letters were often dubious and had to be carefully interpreted, while Roman war letters were usually straightforward and directive, which the Romans appear to have expected in their relations with Judaea since the time of Pompey.[93] Neither deliberation over the meaning of letters nor the practice of serial epistolary communications lent themselves to quick decision-making or rapid implementation. Therefore, strategic and operational precision were difficult to achieve, especially across distance.

On the textual surface, the Romans and Jewish people nonetheless looked similar with reference to embedded letters. Both Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultures sent and received letters and embedded them in narratives. Influenced by both cultures and excelling in his level of literary sophistication as we have seen, Josephus presents his own military career and literary work in this light as a survival strategy personally and on behalf of his people in Judaea and the Diaspora. This literary strategy did not translate, however, into greater capital to wage war, into military strategy and tactics, or into more wealth and prestige for Jews in the Roman world if they had been interested. We have seen that reading letters as artefacts that reflect the culture from which they come—the ideas and institutions of which it is comprised—reveal differences between the cultures. This was especially the case in wartime when capital, strategy, tactics, and command structure efficiency were on full display and utterly consequential. Ultimately, though obscured by the similarity of epistolary embedding techniques, these differences illustrated by embedded letters proved vitally important: the Jews lost the war and had their capital city sacked and their religious centre destroyed, which dealt an enormous blow not only to their quality of life but, eventually, to their very identity.

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[93] Joseph. *B.J.* 1.137.

THE FUNCTION OF THE LETTER FORM IN CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM ACCOUNTS: "I WOULD LIKE MY COMMUNITY, MY CHURCH, MY FAMILY, TO REMEMBER"[1]

Jane McLarty

The quotation in the title of this essay is from a twentieth century martyr's letter: in 1996 Dom Christian de Chergé, Prior of the Abbey of our Lady of the Atlas in Algeria, was murdered along with six other monks by members of the GIA, an Islamist terrorist group. Three years before, Dom Christian had written a letter or testament to be opened in the event of his death; it begins:

> If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to encompass all the foreigners in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, my family, to remember that my life was *given* to God and to this country. To accept that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I would like them to pray for me: how worthy would I be found of such an offering?[2]

The writer's transformation of his status as a victim into willing sacrifice, the desire to communicate his own understanding of his death "in Christ" to the wider community of faith—the very fate of this document, "sent" on to recipients unknown to the original author, all echo themes of the martyrdom letters of the early church, the subject of this essay. De Chergé's brief letter is of course written in the context of two thousand years of Christian history. Earlier accounts are from a time when Christian identity is still in the process of formation, and indeed being defined by texts such as the martyrdom narratives. Key to these accounts is the question of truth: if, as the Introduction to this volume suggests, a letter is particularly

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[1] The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicized edition, copyright (c) 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Chuches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

[2] The letter is published in the on-line *Bulletin* 55, May 1996 of the organisation *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue*, http://monasticdialog.com. The fate of the monks is the subject of a film released in 2010, *Of Gods and Men*, directed by Xavier Beauvois.

associated with truthfulness, then the concern of these letters is to represent the true, spiritual meaning of the martyrs' suffering which is obscured by the horror of the physical events. For the critic, further questions of truth arise around the authenticity of these narratives: are they "real" letters, and do they serve as a window to the early church's view of martyrdom, or are they creations of later theology, "pious forgery" in the somewhat oxymoronic phrase employed by some scholars?[3] All letters are about narrative, but few narratives are written in the form of a letter, and fewer still are addressed to groups rather than individuals: the main purpose of this essay is to argue that there is a distinctively Christian freight attaching to the epistolary narrative of martyrdom, because of the great importance attached to the various members of the church as a unity, as the body of Christ, no matter how geographically scattered they may be; the concept of the letter as reinforcing the bonds of friendship is stretched—or rather, the meaning of friendship itself is re-imagined—so that these martyrdom letters self-consciously address, seek to build and to consolidate the Christian community to which the sufferings of the martyrs bear witness.

Musurillo in his *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* collects twenty-eight of the early martyrdom accounts that he considers "the most reliable or […] extremely important and instructive."[4] Of the accounts he selects, there are five that use the form of the letter: I will focus on the two longest, traditionally dated to the second century, the *Martyrdom Of St Polycarp* and the *Martyrs of Lyons*,[5] which preserve the opening and closing greetings and use the epistolary form to frame an extended, vivid account of Christian suffering.

The choice of the letter-form for Christian discourse should not particularly surprise us; Paul's letters to the church communities he founded are the earliest documents in the Christian canon, written in the 50's AD, and become the paradigm for communications between later Christian leaders such as Clement and Ignatius and gatherings of other Christians.[6] However,

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[3] E.g. Thompson 1912: 359–384, esp. 381.

[4] Musurillo 1972: xii. Text and translations used in this article are from this edition.

[5] The three other accounts in Musurillo's collection using the letter form are: the mid-third century *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*, which begins with a letter, then continues with an account that explicitly aims to fill out the details omitted by the martyrs' modesty; the *Letter of Phileas*; the *Testament of the Forty Martyrs*. The latter two date from the early fourth century, are much briefer and do little more than summarize the martyrs' sufferings.

[6] For discussion of the influence of the Pauline corpus on later Christian letters, see White 1983: 433–444; Liebert 1996: 433–440.

this practice of using the medium of the letter to promulgate religious or philosophical beliefs and to unite a scattered community is not exclusive to Christianity, as Pamela Gordon's contribution to this volume, on Epicurean letters, makes clear. Neither is the address to a collective rather than to an individual a Christian innovation: Demetrius gives advice on writing letters to states,[7] five of the six letters attributed to Demosthenes are addressed to the *boule* and *demos* of Athens, and Isocrates' eighth letter is addressed to the Mytilenean archons. With its own notion of citizenship,[8] system of meetings and hierarchy, the gathered Christian community is not unlike a little state itself. Where the Christian letter draws its particular power is in its referencing the supernatural unity of scattered believers: "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free" (*1 Cors 12:13*); as a consequence, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (*1 Cors 12:26*). The letter seeks to actualize this spiritual unity through its directed communication to fellow-believers.

One metanarrative that to a great extent informs the presentation of the martyrs' suffering is Paul's letter to the Philippians. This letter was widely read in the early church: it is directly quoted or echoed in the first century authors Clement (writing around AD 95) and Ignatius (AD 107), in the second century authors Hermas (AD 140), Justin Martyr (died about AD 165) and in the writings of Polycarp himself and of Irenaeus (AD 200).[9] Significantly, there are echoes of *Philippians* in both the martyrdom letters selected for discussion:[10] the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 1.2 echoes *Philippians* 2:4 in its reference to the importance of the Christians not thinking of themselves alone, but also of their neighbours; the *Martyrs of Lyons* 2.2 directly quotes *Philippians* 2:6, the description of Christ's considering equality with God as something not to be grasped, or clung to, part of Paul's hymn on Christ's self-emptying. The wider context of each allusion is the martyrs' imitation of Christ himself in their suffering. The letter to the Philippians, then, written from prison in the mid-first century, contains important elements of Paul's theology of the significance of Christian suffering,[11] and within the body of

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7 Demetr. *De eloc.* 234. For this and the following references to letters to collectives I am indebted to Owen Hodkinson's conference paper, *Dear Sirs: writing to collectives in the Greek epistolary tradition*.

8 *Phil.* 3:20 "our citizenship [πολίτευμα] is in heaven".

9 Citations of ancient authors taken from Hawthorne 2004: xxviii–xxix.

10 The *Letter of Phileas*, mentioned in note 5 above, also quotes directly from *Philippians* 2: 6–8 in setting out Christ's self-giving as a model for the martyrs' endurance of suffering.

11 For further discussion of the theme of suffering in *Philippians*, see e.g. Bloomquist 1993

the letter there are three themes that are particularly key for giving insight into the function of the epistolary form in *Polycarp* and the *Martyrs of Lyons*.

The first is the notion of κοινωνία, of "fellowship". The very first paragraph of the letter gives thanks to God for the Philippians' sharing in the gospel, ἐπι τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (1:5). A few verses later (1:7), the Philippians are again described as συγκοινωνούς, sharers with Paul in God's grace, both in his chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. Paul explicitly evokes the unity, the commonality, between himself and his addressees because they share not only in his evangelism but also in his suffering. This suffering is a privilege, a grace granted by God (1:28–29). Ultimately it is a sharing of the suffering of Christ himself, where the apostle takes on the form of his death, in the hope of similarly imitating his resurrection (3:10–11).

The second theme is Paul's stress on suffering in the body: it is in his body that Christ will be glorified (μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, 1.20); and at 2:17 comes Paul's striking image of libation, σπένδομαι ("I am being poured out"), a complete physical self-giving, self-emptying, for the sake of the Philippian church. In another reference to the body as the locus of struggle, towards the end of the letter Paul uses a metaphor of athletic contest, "straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize" (3:13–14). Suffering for Paul is a corporeal suffering that is displayed, not just for the benefit of pagan onlookers (although this is important), but also for the sake of the believer.[12]

This is apparent in the third theme just touched on in Philippians but developed more extensively in later martyrdom accounts, the fact that the knowledge of Paul's suffering changes the behaviour of the other believers: it is known, Paul says, that his imprisonment is ἐν Χριστῷ (1:13), and the brothers are emboldened by this into proclaiming the gospel even more boldly (1:14). Paul becomes a living exemplar of the suffering of Christ, spoken through his own body, and this example of the imitation of Christ inspires his fellow Christians themselves to speak out the gospel.

These, then, are themes which will recur in the martyrdom letters: the commonality between the believers, maintained by the letter itself, which informs them of the believers' sufferings and of the meaning with which they invest them; the body's public proclamation through its suffering, and

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and Oakes 2001, who tempers Bloomquist's view of suffering as the primary theme of the letter.

12 A key text examining the Christian attitude to the body is Brown 1988. On suffering in Paul in the context of martyrdom, see Middleton 2006: 136–146 and 2009: 82–93.

the striving to see that suffering through to the end that resembles the striving for glory in a sporting contest; the desire to emulate the martyrs' proclamation that is awakened in the other believers by the knowledge of their suffering, a knowledge communicated by means of the letter.

So, these letters of martyrdom share the themes of *Philippians*: but do they really share its form? Are they "real" letters that were actually despatched, or do they merely echo the genre made authoritative by Paul's epistles? The question of authenticity and historicity has been a bone of scholarly contention both for the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the *Martyrs of Lyons*.[13] Debate has been fiercest over *Polycarp*,[14] which has been dated variously to AD 155/6, AD 166/7, and to the third century (perhaps with an earlier core); the latter dating would suggest that much of the text is a literary construct. *Lyons* is preserved only within Eusebius' fourth century history of the church; although it purports to narrate a persecution of Christians of AD 177, J.W. Thompson[15] raised questions around oddities in aspects of the legal process it recounts, and argued that some elements (such as eagerness for martyrdom and miraculous elements) are more characteristic of later third century martyrdom accounts. Another suggestion is that Eusebius or another third century redactor may have expanded an original text.[16] These accounts may then be examples of the exploitation of the "inherently truthful nature of letters",[17] to add verisimilitude to a pious fiction.

There is no sufficiently conclusive evidence on either side to close the debate. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that these are genuine letters, or at least that the original core (if one thinks there has been later redaction) was a letter: it seems reasonable that a letter should be written in response to enquiries about the fate of Polycarp, the occasion of writing cited within the letter itself, which names its author, Evaristus;[18] as for the *Martyrs of Lyons*, if the Christian communities in Gaul were of Asian origin, as has been widely argued,[19] communication between the two is not unexpected. Obviously the question of authenticity is vital if one wishes to use these texts as a window into the beliefs and practices of early Christian

13 For a useful survey of the issues, see Dehandschutter 2007.

14 For a discussion of the range of possible dates, see Dehandschutter 2007: 56 ff.

15 Thompson 1912: 359–384.

16 Moss 2010: 189.

17 See the Introduction to this volume (pp. 15–16).

18 *Mart.Pol.* 20.

19 By e.g. Griffe 1964: 24–33; Frend 1964: 125–129. Both references, with further detail, from Dehandschutter 2005: 8 n. 19.

communities, but for the purposes of this essay, even if the epistolary form itself is a construct, the interpretative question still remains as to the particular kind of meaning contributed by the letter-form for the Christian writer and reader. To address this question I now turn to a closer reading of the letters, considering first the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

After a preamble describing the sufferings of martyrs in general terms and mentioning one or two by name, the bulk of the narrative describes the experiences of the Bishop of Smyrna (modern Izmir), Polycarp; tradition holds that he was a follower of the disciple John and that he later became the teacher of Irenaeus, bishop of Gaul. In this narrative he is an old man of eighty-six: persuaded to leave Smyrna when the persecution of Christians begins, he is hunted down and arrested by the authorities; he is brought into the amphitheatre, where the Governor tries to persuade him to recant in a vivid exchange; when Polycarp refuses, he is burnt alive, his remains are cremated, and then reverently collected and buried by his followers.

Turning to the detail of the text, the letter opens with a greeting from the church in Smyrna to a particular church in Philomelium, further east in modern Turkey. Elements of the greeting are explicitly Christian in flavour and comparable to the opening of Philippians; where Paul declares χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη, "grace and peace" to the church, this letter declares ἔλεος εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη ("mercy and peace and love"). Significantly, the greeting is extended to the entire holy, worldwide church: this is a letter which the authors intend will be circulated beyond its immediate recipients, as were Paul's letters. Its occasion of writing was however an existing connection between the churches of Smyrna and Philomelium: "You asked us then to give you a lengthy account of what took place [...] after you have heard the story, send the letter to our more distant brothers, that they too may give glory to the Lord" (20.1).[20] This is a letter that is intended to build community, to strengthen the bonds between scattered churches, and to encourage the believers, and it does this in a number of specific ways.

Firstly, the letter enables the recipient churches to share in the witness of Polycarp's sufferings. The detail of events recounted in the narrative intensifies its vividness: for instance, the soldiers take Polycarp down from the carriage so hastily that he scrapes his shin; he struggles to untie his sandals when stripping himself for the pyre because hitherto he has always been served by the Christian community. The slowing of narrative time when Polycarp finally enters the amphitheatre, so that the exchanges between the

[20] Compare the opening of *1 Peter*, addressed to "the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (*1 Pet.* 1:1)–clearly intended as an encyclical letter.

bishop and the governor are apparently fully reported in "real time", adds to the sense that the reader is re-experiencing the spectacle of the martyrdom, which is the spectacle of Polycarp's faith proved with his body. Seneca notes, *Numquam epistulam tuam accipio, ut non protinus una simus*–"I never receive a letter from you, without being in your company forthwith."[21] Cicero, too, defines a letter as *amicorum conloquia absentium*, the communion of friends in absence.[22] Pseudo-Libanius, writing some time in the fourth to sixth century AD, notes that a letter is a kind of written conversation, and in it one speaks as though in company of the absent person, ἐρει δέ τις ἐν αὐτῇ ὥσπερ παρών τις πρὸς παρόντα.[23] Paul says in writing to the Corinthian church, ἀπων τῷ σώματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι, "though absent in body I am present in spirit" (*1 Cors*. 5:3). *Polycarp* coheres with this epistolary tradition of "mediated presence",[24] of the letter standing in for the physical presence of the sender and receivers together, allowing the recipient churches in a sense to be present, to be fellow-witnesses of Polycarp's suffering.

Letters exchanged between absent friends are intended to reinforce the bonds of friendship, and they do this at least in part by allusion to shared, particular knowledge and experience. Paul's letters to the churches are sprinkled with allusions to his time with them in person and to shared knowledge of Christian teaching, for instance:

1 Cors 1:26 Βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλῆσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς

Consider your own call, brothers: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

2 Cors. 8:9 γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι' ῾υμας ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὤν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Phils. 4:15 οἴδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππήσιοι, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινώνησεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι

[21] *Ep*. 40.1 in Malherbe 1988: 28.

[22] *Phil*. 2.4.7, cited in Klauck 2006: 192.

[23] *Epistolary Styles*, 2, in Malherbe 1988: 67. On absence as epistolary motivation and motif see further in this volume the Introduction, (pp. 11–14), and discussions by Slater (p. 212), Repath (p. 237), Kasprzyk (p. 267), and Hodkinson (p. 332).

[24] Klauck 2006: 191.

> You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone.

The first two examples above illustrate Paul's emphasis in his letters on the paradoxical nature of the Christian message, comprehensible only to those who have understood that "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (*1 Cors*. 1:25). The Christian letter reinforces this countercultural message, binding together sender and recipients as "insiders" who understand the true nature of reality, and this function of the letter is prominent in *Polycarp*. The persecution of the Christians by the civic authorities demonstrates the Christian status as "other", as those whose bodies can be violated: but through its narrative of Polycarp's sufferings, the letter powerfully re-defines this marginal status as one of privilege. The worldview of the dominant, persecuting culture is subverted. Partly this is achieved through manipulation of language: when urged by the Governor to recant his faith, and to say Αἶρε τοὺς ἀθέους "away with the atheists",[25] Polycarp does indeed repeat these words—but only after surveying and gesturing at the pagan crowd. The play on words speaks directly to the Christian reader over the head of the pagan narrative audience to create a community of understanding between character, author and reader. More significantly, the letter presents a privileged knowledge to the reader, sights and sounds accessible only to the Christian observers: for instance, as Polycarp enters the amphitheatre, there comes a voice from heaven, heard only by those of τῶν ἡμετέρων, "our people", who were there.[26] Strikingly, for the Christian onlookers alone, Polycarp's martyrdom itself is transformed from the horrific sight and stench of burning flesh to a fragrant vision of a metaphorical purification or offering. The narrative functions in this respect as apocalyptic literature that "lifts the veil" to show the true nature of reality for the Christian audience, and binds them together in a community that alone knows the spiritual truth underlying these physical events.

The community reinforced by the letter is also one of privileged suffering: the motif discernible in Paul's letters of the honour of suffering for the name of Christ is again foregrounded in Polycarp's prayer before his death, in which he thanks God that he is thought worthy of sharing with the martyrs in the cup of Christ. Those who witness his sufferings—whether at first

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[25] *Mart. Pol.* 9.2.
[26] *Mart. Pol.* 9.1.

hand or through the medium of the letter—are, possibly, potential martyrs themselves, and a major purpose of the letter is to inspire, encourage and implant the desire to emulate him in those who read the account.

The Christian community in Smyrna will, says the author, gather at the site of Polycarp's burial to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, as a memorial for those who have already "fought the contest" and to train and prepare those who will follow in his footsteps.[27] Here we see a hint of the language of athletic struggle first seen in Paul, which will be greatly developed in the letter from Lyons.

The present scholarly consensus is that persecution in the first centuries was in fact sporadic in nature:[28] Pliny when writing as Governor of Bithynia (which position he held from AD 111–113) to Trajan for advice, for instance, is unsure of the party line for dealing with Christians, and Trajan's rescript confirms that they are not to be actively sought out.[29] A secondary purpose of the letter, therefore, is to give convincing first-hand evidence of the reality of the situation faced by their brothers and sisters to a part of the wider church that may not actually be experiencing suffering at present, through an account from witnesses, those who were there. For the authors of this letter, it must be noted, the primary concern is not to describe in detail the pains suffered by Polycarp (as already noted, the horror of his death is transformed into metaphor) but to communicate its spiritual value and significance.

It might be objected that any narrative (not only a letter) could achieve the kinds of effect described above: extending the spectacle and witness of martyrdom to a wider audience, creating a sense of community between author and reader, acting as both authentication of martyrs' experience and inspiration for future martyrs. The letter form, however, allows the direct appeal from the first person of the sending community to the second person of the receiving community: scattered through this letter are not only numerous first person references, but also the direct address to the recipients as ἀδελφοί, "brothers". This indicates another important aspect of the emotive appeal of the martyrdom letters: the use of familial language in their discourse. The presentation of the group around Jesus as a "family" is found in the Gospels, Jesus, responding to the news that his family are asking for him, asks: " 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at

27 *Mart. Pol.* 18.6.
28 See de Ste Croix 1963: 5–23 for an influential statement of this view.
29 *Ep.* 10.96–97.

those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'" (*Mark* 3:33–34)[30] Further evidence for the continuation of this valorizing of discipleship ties over those of family in early Christianity is found in the second and third century Apocryphal Acts and their stories of the rejection of marital ties for the allure of an apostle's preaching.[31] In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, alongside the numerous references to the respect due to Polycarp's age is a declaration (by the pagan audience) that he is ὁ πατὴρ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, "the father of the Christians".[32] The martyrdom letters are family letters, depicting the sufferings of family members, with all the added pathos that this entails. Although the suffering endured by Polycarp, as mentioned above, is presented to divert the reader's eye from the harsh physical realities to the spiritual meaning of his death, this is not typical of martyrdom accounts, and in the account of the *Martyrs of Lyons*, the atmosphere of the letter is in many ways very different from that of Polycarp: where Polycarp spiritualizes suffering, in the *Martyrs of Lyons* we have graphic representation of realistic suffering under torture, of horror and fear, and to this text we will now turn.

The opening greeting of this letter is preserved in Eusebius, but not the ending, and it is apparent that some editing has taken place in what originally must have been a very lengthy text.[33] The letter describes an upsurge of violence against the Christian community in Gaul, beginning with a general description of the situation in which the prefect orders an investigation of all Christians (for reasons which remain unclear); the text explains how the most prominent Christians are seized first, thereby removing the community's leaders, and touches on the accusations (by slaves under torture) that the Christians take part in Thyestean banquets and Oedipean marriages, references to the sharing of the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine, and to the Christian practice of addressing one another as "brother" and "sister".[34] The narrative then primarily concentrates on the fate of four named Christians, Maturus, Sanctus, Attalus and Blandina, who is the Christian slave of a Christian mistress.

As with *Polycarp*, the function of the letter form in reinforcing the particular connections of faith and worldview between the sending and receiving communities is apparent from the initial address, "to brothers with the same

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30 See Barton 1994.
31 See Brown 1988.
32 *Mart. Pol.* 12.2.
33 See Musurillo 1972: xx–xxii, and the fuller discussion in Dehandschutter 2007: 237–255.
34 See Wagemakers 2010: 337–354.

faith and hope in the redemption", τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως ἡμῖν πίστιν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἔχουσιν ἀδελφοῖς.[35] There are no direct addresses to the recipients within the body of the letter as there are in *Polycarp*: however, the detail given that Attalus' family are from Pergamum serves the same rhetorical purpose, in that it is an evocation of the personal connection between the two communities of Gaul and Asia.

Above all, in this account the persecution takes place within a community of Christians; the importance of the support offered by members of the suffering community to one another is strongly foregrounded in the text. A prominent townsman, Vettius Epagathus, comes forward in court to protest formally against the unreasonable (ἀλόγως)[36] judgement meted out to the Christians, of whom he is one; Alexander, a doctor, being questioned alongside others encourages them in their confession;[37] those enduring torment continue to encourage and exhort others;[38] even within the amphitheatre itself, the martyrs encourage one another (Blandina helps Ponticus, a boy of 15, to stand firm under torture),[39] and after their death, the surviving members of the community do their utmost to recover the bodies of the martyrs so as to give them decent burial, though to no avail.[40] The importance of the solidarity and cohesion of the Christian community in the face of the bitter hostility of former friends and neighbours is obvious, and the letter both displays and embodies the power of speech to strengthen the resolve of the martyrs, and to encourage its recipients.[41] However, there is more than this behind this emphasis on the group of believers, as Judith Perkins points out: in the end, martyrdom is about "the defining and strengthening of a corporate body, the Christian community, described by Paul as 'the body of Christ'".[42] The letter addressed to the distant community is the instrument for extending this cohesion, this κοινωνία, to the other end of the Roman empire: the body of Christ is extended through the material letter, the representation and the consolidation of physical as well as spiritual unity. As the epistolary theorists recognised, the letter represents a physical trace of absent friends:

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35 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.3.
36 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.9.
37 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.49.
38 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.28.
39 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.54.
40 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.61.
41 See also Olson (p. 362) for another example of a Christian letter sent to strengthening a community in the early church, with non-Christian comparisons.
42 Perkins 2001: 118.

> *quae vera amici absentis vestigialia, versa notas adferunt. Nam quod in conspectus dulcissimum est, id amici manus epistulae impressa praestat, agnoscere.*
>
> which brings us real traces, real evidences, of an absent friend! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter—recognition.[43]

There is a practical reason for the importance of the mutual encouragement offered by the martyrs, since a minor theme woven through these narratives of suffering and torture is that of fear; not of the torments themselves, but that the martyrs may not be able to withstand them and may fail in their witness. Failure is very bad for community cohesion: it "blunts the enthusiasm" τὴν προθυμίαν […] ἐνέκοψαν[44] of those who have faithfully supported the martyrs and refused to abandon them. It becomes clear that at least part of the purpose of this letter is to affirm that the confession of Christ itself gives strength and courage to the martyrs; the letter then is an argument for endurance, that holding firm in itself gives the strength to continue to hold firm. "Passive" endurance becomes an active Christian virtue.

As in the case of *Polycarp*, the readers of the narrative become co-witnesses of the suffering of the church in Gaul: this is a letter that re-reads suffering for the Christian community. The dreadful death that is turned to metaphor in the case of Polycarp is re-enacted in the *Martyrs of Lyons* letter in detail and at length. The narration of Sanctus's sufferings will give a flavour of how this is done. His refusal to say anything apart from Χριστιανός εἰμί, "I am a Christian", enrages his torturers:

> Τὸ τελευταῖον χαλχᾶς λεπίδας διαπύρους προσεκόλλων τοῖς τρυφερωτάτοις μέλεσι τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἐκαίετο, αὐτὸς δὲ παρέμενεν ἀνεπίκαμπτος καὶ ἀνένδοτος … τὸ δὲ σωμάτιον μάρτυς ἦν τῶν συμβεβηκότων, ὅλον τραῦμα καὶ μώλωψ καὶ συνεσπασμένον καὶ ἀποβεβληκὸς τὴν ἀνθρώπειον ἔξωθεν μορρφήν, ἐν ᾧ πάσχων Χριστὸς μεγάλας ἐπετέλει δόξας.[45]
>
> They finally tried pressing red-hot bronze plates against the tenderest parts of his body. And though these did burn him, he none the less remained unbending and stubborn […] but his body bore witness to his sufferings, being all one bruise and one wound, stretched and distorted out of any recognizably human shape; but Christ suffering in him achieved great glory.

This is not the end of Sanctus' suffering: later he is brought into the amphitheatre with the other named martyrs, tortured further and eventually

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[43] Seneca, *Ep*. 40.1.
[44] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.11.
[45] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.22–23.

killed. The spiritualising approach to his sufferings is not absent, but there is a greater emphasis on the reality and intensity of the community's sufferings. This is at least partly because of the changing emphasis on the meaning assigned to those sufferings, and a more explicit relation of the sufferings of the martyrs to the sufferings of Christ than is found in *Polycarp*.[46] In the Lyons narrative, it is Christ himself who suffers within Sanctus, and also within the slave Blandina, who when hung on a post as βορά, bait for the wild beasts, seems to hang there in the form of a cross.[47] This is a significance given to their suffering that is comprehensible to and accessible to the Christian community alone. The battle is on a cosmic plane, a battle to force the Christians to deny Christ, and the victory achieved in faithfulness to the confession of Christ is a victory over "the adversary". It is the willingness to suffer and the endurance of suffering to the end that has value: there is little hint in either narrative that the sight of the martyrs serves to persuade any pagan onlookers of the truth of their faith. In fact, the vision of Blandina in the form of Christ is explicitly stated to be to encourage the Christian onlookers, and to convince them that all who suffer for his glory will have eternal fellowship in the living God.[48] The readers' gaze is then almost entirely directed to the sufferers themselves, and the audience is portrayed only as "wild beasts" howling for blood: a dehumanising of the pagans which subverts their status in much the same way as Polycarp's jibe about atheists does.

The discourse of athletic contest, a discourse which was touched on in *Polycarp*, becomes a central theme in *Lyons*, and an important way in which suffering is re-presented, re-read for the Christian community. Those not prepared to hold to a confession of faith are "untrained", ἀγύμναστοι, unable to bear the demands of a great contest or ἀγών.[49] Anyone who does endure torture however, is a "noble athlete", γενναίος ἀθλητής,[50] the term used to describe both Maturus and Blandina. The writer plays with the image of the crown of victory, first imagining it as composed of the martyrs' various sufferings and presented to God, then suggesting that "immortality", ἀφθαρσία, is the crown that will reward these athletes' struggles.[51] The most striking use of this language of competition occurs when the image is retrojected on to Christ himself; using a Pauline metaphor, Blandina has "put on" Christ,

46 Moss 2010 gives a compelling treatment of this theme in accounts of martyrdom.
47 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.41.
48 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.41.
49 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.11.
50 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.19.
51 *Mart. Lugd.* 1.36.

the great and unconquerable athlete, μέγαν καὶ ἀκαταγώνιστον ἀθλητὴν Χριστὸν ἐνδεδυμένη.[52] The Christians with this language regain "subject" rather than "object" status in this account: rather than the passive victims of persecution, they become elite, trained and victorious competitors, with the stamina to endure the pain of the body in order to claim victory through the body that publicly displays the suffering of Christ. Their sufferings therefore should not dismay their readers, but encourage them: Christ himself has been displayed in the arena, victorious in suffering, and through the vivid description of that suffering, unsparing in its graphic detail, the readers of the letter are made witnesses alongside the Lyons community.

Finally, familial language occurs also in the *Lyons* letter: the address of ἀδελφοί occurs as mentioned above in the initial greeting, and then just once in the body of the letter, in a reference to Blandina's example strengthening her brothers (or the brothers).[53] The corresponding term of sister is used for Blandina herself. More interesting is the use of maternal imagery, for both men and women. The doctor Alexander, who encouraged those being questioned with him, through this action is as one in labour, ὥσπερ ὠδίνων,[54] giving birth to martyrs. In an extended metaphor Blandina is described as a mother[55] who after encouraging her children hurries to rejoin them in death. The death of the martyrs in Lyons takes place under the eyes of their spiritual brothers and sisters and mother, and by its narration, under the eyes of their brethren across the Empire as well.

Conclusions

Above all, the martyrdom letters are about building the community of the Christian believers over against the pagan culture in which they live. The inherent truthfulness of the letter form is important in this regard, because these accounts present an alternative reality, they constitute an apocalyptic narrative revealing the true nature of the events recounted, for the privileged Christian reader. The values of the dominant culture are subverted: the passive and powerless victims become victors through their endurance of suffering to the very end, and the language of athletic prowess is appropriated to re-present apparent humiliation and defeat as

[52] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.42.
[53] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.42.
[54] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.50.
[55] *Mart. Lugd.* 1.55.

glorious triumph. Whether the letters themselves are "true letters" is a moot point; "the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is most interesting if it is true", says Sara Parvis,[56] avoiding explicit judgement on the letter's authenticity. But equally interesting is the retention (if authentic at their core) or the creation of an epistolary framework for accounts which could equally well be conveyed in plain narrative. This is not wholly explained by a desire to add verisimilitude to an otherwise unconvincing narrative. The martyrdom letters sit within a tradition of Christian epistolarity which itself references a philosophical tradition of communication with scattered followers. Paul's theology of the Christian community as the body of Christ is fundamental to the purpose of the epistolary form of these letters. By the use of familial language the readers are reminded of their connection to these distant brothers and sisters, fellow members of the body, and their suffering is given emotional weight for the letters' recipients. Through the letter medium, the readers are explicitly summoned to become fellow-witnesses of the spectacle of their brothers' and sisters' suffering and death. By this means the spectacles that took place on a certain day in Smyrna or Lyons escape the bonds of time and space and again and again, wherever they are read, display Christ crucified in the bodies of the martyrs. The letters then build not only the receiving but the sending community, who know that their brothers and sisters across the Roman world by this means become, as Paul would put it, κοινωνοί, "sharers in their suffering": they, and the meaning ascribed to their death, are remembered.

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56 Parvis 2006: 111.

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